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GRANT RISEE?

The Medieval Comic Presence
La Présence comique médiévale
Essays in Memory of Brian J. Levy

Edited by

Adrian P. Tudor

and

Alan Hindley



BREPOLS

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Grant risee? : the medieval comic presence = la présence
comique médiévale : essays in honour of Brian J. Levy. -
(Medieval texts and cultures of Northern Europe ; 11)
1.French wit and humor - History and criticism 2.Wit and
humor, Medieval - History and criticism 3.Civilization,
Medieval 4.French literature - To 1500 - History and
criticism
I.Levy, B. J. (Brian Joseph) II.Tudor, Adrian III.Hindley,
A.
847.1'09

ISBN-10: 250351698X

**The publication of this volume benefited from financial support from
the Committee of the Modern Humanities Research Association.**

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D/2006/0095/4
ISBN: 2-503-51698-X

Printed in the E.U. on acid-free paper

Brian J. Levy, 1938–2004



Brian as the draper in *La Farce de M^r Pierre Pathelin*, 1980

© The University of Hull Photographic Service

Gens sont qui ont plus kier risees
Et mokeries desghisees
Oïr que ne face siermons.

— *Le Pliçon* (NRCE, x/116, vv. 1–3)

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PREFACE

Towards the end of 2003, some of Brian Levy's colleagues decided that it would be appropriate to mark his 65th birthday in October 2004, his impending retirement from the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Hull, and his final volume as co-editor of *Reinardus* (after eighteen years) by the publication of a volume of essays in his honour. Alas, with the project nearing completion, Brian died suddenly of a heart attack on 10 August 2004, just a few days after his official retirement. The volume must now therefore serve as a memorial to Brian who, with his characteristic ebullience and sense of enjoyment in discovery, dedicated much of his career to communicating to others his love of the Middle Ages. The theme of our celebration of Brian's life — *la grant risee* — seems no less appropriate to the memorial volume than to the *Festschrift* as originally conceived, since Brian loved to laugh and to make others laugh too.

Over a period of almost forty years Brian taught a wide variety of courses: modern French language, grammar, translation theory and practice; modern French literature (in particular novels about the Great War); French film (especially from the 1930s and 1940s); Old French language and literature (the whole gamut, from fabliaux and pious tales to epic, romance, and lyric); medieval art and iconography (manuscript illustration, sculpture, stained glass, and architecture); codicology and palaeography; and 'The Middle Ages Go to the Movies' (filmic adaptations of medieval texts and legends). His classes were so popular that, in the era of modules and limited class sizes, his options were regularly over-subscribed. Students at New York University and Plymouth State University were equally as responsive when Brian was invited to contribute to their courses on the performance of medieval narrative. And his was no idle academic interest in performance issues, as can be seen from the frontispiece illustration in the present volume, depicting his memorable role as the Draper in the Hull French Department's production of *La Farce de M^e Pierre Pathelin*.

He also starred in a video-production of *La Farce du Cuvier*, and more recently 'burned' his first CD, *Ribaudie et Repentanche*.

Brian was instrumental in raising Hull University's research profile in the area of Medieval French Studies. His interests were nothing if not eclectic; a full account is provided in Kate Boardman's contribution to this volume. A particular feature of Brian's research was his constant willingness to collaborate with other scholars. He was a member of a number of editorial boards, including the Brepols Series of *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe*, of which he was also Secretary. He arranged and attended numerous conferences in Europe, North America, and Asia; indeed his organization of the 2001 biennial conference of The International Reynard Society at his own University of Hull was for Brian a career highlight. He was a founder-member of this society, whose year-book, *Reinardus*, he co-edited with Paul Wackers. He served for many years on the organizing committee of the Leeds International Medieval Congress and was a member of the Modern Humanities Research Association.

On 10 November 2004 a memorial service was held for Brian in the Middleton Hall of the University of Hull, which was attended by well over a hundred colleagues and friends, some having travelled from as far away as Paris, Galway, Exeter, London, Leeds, Newcastle, Liverpool, and Manchester. This occasion, which ended with a moving *Kaddish*, was also (and most fittingly) marked by a great sense of fun as we exchanged anecdotes about the man known to many of us as 'BJL'.

What most of us will remember about Brian are perhaps the times outside the classroom, conference session, and lecture hall: heated debates over the merits of beer, football matches, and film; the exchange of funny stories, often rude and sometimes off-the-wall; discussions of political questions past, present, and future; Jewish jokes and anecdotes; scything criticisms of university 'suits' whose decisions he deemed increasingly unpedagogical and unacademic (and whose follies he often celebrated in satirical verse); and, of course, conversations revolving around any aspect of medieval culture. For Brian, the pinnacle of his career would have been an invitation to address the Pseudo Society at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, and to have his contribution published in the Society's Proceedings. Unfortunately, although Brian already had a number of topics in mind, we are unable to realize this ambition for him. However, with the present volume, we do our best to remember with affection the inspired teacher, the dedicated scholar, and the good friend.

A.P.T.

A.H.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume was originally intended as a celebration of Brian Levy's academic life past, present, and future, and his untimely death obviously made this a much more sensitive project for all involved. We should like to thank everybody for their understanding and cooperation.

A number of friends and colleagues made important contributions to the preparation of *Grant risee*. The contributors themselves responded promptly to editorial requests, and their willingness to help in every way made our task much easier. Nancy Black, Professor of English at Brooklyn College, CUNY, helped us decipher the cover image and provided some extremely useful insights into its role in Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS 229. We are indebted to Dr Simon Forde, of Brepols Publishers, for his help and advice at all stages of the project. We are also most grateful to Wendy Scase, Professor of English at the University of Birmingham, for helping us see the book through its final stages. The Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Hull, provided material support throughout.

We are very grateful to Brian's former colleagues on the Committee of the Modern Humanities Research Association for their generous financial support.

As the volume went to press, we learned of the death of one of our contributors, Gianni Mombello. We should like to extend our deepest sympathy to his family, colleagues, and friends.

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THE MEDIEVAL COMIC PRESENCE

Adrian P. Tudor and Alan Hindley

The theme of medieval humour was not a difficult choice for the editors of this volume, dedicated to a fine scholar who so loved life. But the question of how to treat it certainly was, given the complexities relating to theories on the nature of 'humour' in general, and to the concept of 'the medieval sense of humour' in particular. The earliest monuments of medieval vernacular literature — the first epics, many romances, the saints' lives — seem to us often austere and humourless, their sober themes exalted to a heroic plane by poets rapt in their vision of the absolute, their episodes evoking our admiration and our pity, but rarely — at least initially — our laughter. The same comments might apply to other witnesses of artistic expression — drama, book and manuscript illustration, art and iconography, music — from throughout medieval Europe. Henri Bergson long ago reminded us, of course, that humour has to do with what is essentially human, taking up Rabelais's adage that 'le rire est le propre de l'homme'.¹ More recently, Bakhtinian theory,² positing the existence of a potentially subversive, unofficial ideology that runs contrary to 'official' culture, opened up fresh approaches to the study of medieval, especially late medieval, society.³ Yet Bakhtin's theory of carnival, whilst drawing attention to the important place of humour in medieval society, can also be interpreted as an expression, not of a liberating and subversive force, but paradoxically as a safety-

¹ Henri Bergson, *Le Rire: essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris: Alcan, 1920).

² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984; 1st edn, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968).

³ See, for instance, *Bakhtin and Medieval Voices*, ed. by Thomas J. Farrell (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995).

valve that serves rather to reinforce a conservative ideology, as more recent studies have shown.⁴

But if laughter is a liberating force, what exactly is it liberating us from? It is tempting to suggest that this sense of liberation may have something to do with the attitude to laughter of the medieval Church, sometimes reflected in the discussion of whether Christ himself ever laughed or smiled. If he did not, how can it be argued that laughter is part of human nature? As E. R. Curtius points out in the relatively few pages he devotes to 'Jest and Earnest in Medieval Literature', the Church's views on the matter were in no way unified.⁵ The early Church Fathers were much exercised by the nature and function of humour, often finding support for their views in the Bible: Ecclesiastes 3. 4, 'tempus flendi et tempus ridendi tempus plangendi et tempus saltandi'; but also Ephesians 5. 4, where Paul forbids 'stultiloquium' and 'scurrilitas' to the followers of God. The latter attitude in particular probably caused laughter to be stigmatized as part of the *contemptus mundi* to be found in certain moralizing texts, where humour at the expense of sinners is used as a didactic device.⁶ The ways in which preachers, for instance, used humorous exempla to remind their congregations that if they sinned then they would similarly be objects of ridicule is now well understood, thanks to the work of scholars such as Albert Lecoy de la Marche and Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache.⁷

Other significant attempts to characterize the medieval sense of humour may be seen in the contributions of scholars such as Johan Huizinga, who examined the comic — laughter, jesting, wit, the joke (the range of lexis required to encapsulate the phenomenon reminds us of its daunting complexity) — in the context of his seminal study of the nature of play.⁸ This aspect of the humour of the fabliaux is the subject of chapter 2 of Brian Levy's *The Comic Text*, which

⁴ See, for instance, Peter Stallybrass and Allan White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

⁵ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), pp. 417–35 (pp. 420–22).

⁶ See, for instance, Jean Verdon, *Rire au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Perrin, 2001).

⁷ Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *L'Esprit de nos aïeux: anecdotes et bons mots tirés des manuscrits du XI^e siècle* (Paris: Marpon–Flammarion, 1888); updated and reprinted as: Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *Le Rire du prédicateur*, ed. by Jacques Berlioz, *Miroir du Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992); Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L'Humour en chaire: le rire dans l'église médiévale*, *Histoire et Société*, 28 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994).

⁸ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949).

demonstrates the ludic nature of the comic narrative in its frequent presentation of conflicts from which there will emerge winners and losers.⁹ Of course the fabliaux (late twelfth to early fourteenth centuries), and the farces (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) remain amongst the best known and most obvious expressions of medieval humour, and on the face of it, the least problematic.¹⁰ Bakhtin in particular reminded us of the problematic role of the comic in medieval and Renaissance society. For him, comedy and laughter were a conduit into otherwise forbidding areas of truth:

Laughter has a deep philosophical meaning; it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; it is a peculiar point of view relative to the world; the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint [. . .]. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter.

Medieval parodies, he points out, offer similar perspectives:

For the medieval parodist everything without exception was comic. Laughter was as universal as seriousness; it was directed at the whole world, at history, at all societies, at ideology. It was the world's second truth extended to everything and from which nothing is taken away. It was, as it were, the festive aspect of the whole world in all its elements, the second revelation of the world in play and laughter.¹¹

At the beginning of his important introduction to *Le Rire au Moyen Age dans la littérature et dans les arts*, Philippe Ménard saw it as important to remind his reader that any study of medieval comedy and laughter must transcend the barriers of traditional scholarship: 'Pour l'étude du rire, il est toujours profitable de ne pas s'enfermer dans le seul monde des créations littéraires. Il importe d'examiner la civilisation médiévale en son ensemble.'¹² These academic barriers —

⁹ Brian J. Levy, *The Comic Text: Patterns and Images in the Old French Fabliaux*, Faux Titre, 186 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

¹⁰ For the fabliaux, see Brian J. Levy, *Comic Text*; Per Nykrog, *Les fabliaux: Etude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médiévale* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1957); Charles Muscatine, *The Old French Fabliaux* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); R. Howard Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); and for the farce, Barbara Bowen, *Les Caractéristiques essentielles de la farce française et leur survivance entre les années 1550–1620* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1964); Bernadette Rey-Flaud, *La Farce ou la machine à rire: théorie d'un genre dramatique, 1450–1550* (Geneva: Droz, 1984).

¹¹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 84.

¹² Philippe Ménard, 'Le Rire et le sourire au Moyen Age dans la littérature et dans les arts: Essai de problématique', in *Le Rire au Moyen Age dans la littérature et dans les arts: Actes du*

between art history, iconography, literature, the profane arts, musicology, codicology, and so on — were already being breached when Ménard published this essay, and have continued to be so since. Ménard draws our attention to the myriad forms which medieval humour can take — from the marginal doodlings on a manuscript page, to the biting satire of social groups with a particular axe to grind, via the burlesque of carnival entertainments, through to the more subtle humour of wit and wordplay. We should be grateful to Ménard, and to many other scholars over the last fifteen or twenty years, that it is no longer necessary in an introduction such as this to make forced claims of homogeneity, justifying the juxtaposition of essays on such diverse topics as misericords, drama, narrative texts, and seals, covering a period of up to five hundred years, and emanating from a variety of different European locations.

The cover illustration chosen for the present volume provides a neat visual aid to the various possibilities of the medieval joke. Who could not but find amusing a bishop performing a blessing whilst sitting backwards on a donkey, raising the donkey's tail, and directing the animal's arse at the pious (?) recipient of the blessing? However, to appreciate fully the joke's function, to be able to decide whether in fact this *is* a joke — could it be rather a deadly serious commentary on the state of things? — we need to do some digging. The image is a marginal illustration found on fol. 104^v of MS 229 in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, accompanying the Agravains section of the enormous prose *Lancelot*, the third of five prose romances in the Vulgate Cycle. It appears as a small superior marginal addition to a large illustration depicting the Scottish King Heliser, converted by Joseph of Arimathea, being given food by an abbey porter.¹³ Though the connection between such marginal figures and the main illustration is not always particularly clear, Michael Camille has suggested that they might provide 'an ironic commentary on the central action and its illustrations',¹⁴ in this case, possibly, a comment on the role of the Church

colloque international des 17, 18 et 19 novembre 1988, ed. by Thérèse Bouché and Hélène Charpentier (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1990), pp. 7–30 (p. 7).

¹³ See Barbara A. Shailor, *Catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University* (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1984); Shailor, *The Medieval Book: Illustrated from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

¹⁴ See Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), p. 106.

seen from the perspective of the ‘world turned upside down’. Yale MS 229, it seems, makes much use of such scatological images.¹⁵ The essential point to make, perhaps, is that we do not fully understand the context: indeed the humour could well have been different for the copyist, for the illuminator, for the recipient of the manuscript, or for its subsequent readers — as indeed for ourselves as we look at the manuscript today. The context, in other words, is crucial. A useful reminder, then, of some of the issues raised in this volume, and therefore entirely appropriate as its cover illustration.

As for the volume’s title, the expression *grant risee* is taken from the lovely but unremarkable Old French fabliau *Le Pliçon*. A wily wife and her lover have been surprised at home by the return of the husband, forcing the lover to hide in the wife’s cloak. ‘What would you do if you came home one day and found me with a lover?’ she nervously asks. He replies: ‘I’d cut off his head and kill you as well!’ The narrative continues:

Celle qui bien fu ensaignie
Et au grant besoins avisee,
Li a dit faisant grant risee:
‘Vous ne savés que fait eüssse
Ne comment gardé m’en eüssse:
N’en fuisse gaires en friçon!’¹⁶

The standard dictionaries give the first definition of the expression *risee* as ‘burst of laughter’, but then go on to note a shift in meaning to a slightly more malicious sense of mockery. In *Le Pliçon*, both meanings are present: on one level the adulterous wife is joking with her husband; but even in this delicate situation, with the lover hiding beneath her cloak, she still has the audacity to laugh at her unfortunate spouse. Such ambiguities are precisely what contributors to this volume were asked to explore. Our volume, *Grant risee?*, thus intentionally embraces a wide range of subject material; it investigates different facets of this *problématique* and at the same time reflects the varied interests of the volume’s dedicatee. Contributors were invited to explore unusual, unexpected, or unacknowledged elements of humour in medieval literature and art and rewarded the editors with essays highlighting comic elements taking an unusual form (Crouch, Bolvig, Simpson, Coote), a comic presence in unexpected places (Crouch,

¹⁵ We are most grateful to Nancy Black of Brooklyn College, CUNY (and a friend of Brian Levy) for these extremely helpful comments on our illustration.

¹⁶ *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*, ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico Van den Boogaard, 10 vols (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983–98), X/116, vv. 74–79.

Bolvig, Block, Tudor, Mombello, Hindley, Corbellari), comic elements intentionally or unintentionally hidden (Bolvig, Emerson, Hindley, Corbellari), a comic presence in a standard context which stands out for a particular reason (Corbellari, Cobby, Varty, Batany, Wackers), comic elements which seem for some reason controversial (Emerson, Pastré, Block, Coote, Cobby), unacknowledged comic potential or its reverse (Bolvig, Corbellari, Hindley, Tudor, Batany, Beer), comic elements as yet unidentified or unacknowledged (Corbellari, Crouch), codicological assessments (Busby, Schenck), or a commonly acknowledged comic presence which is in fact no such thing (Emerson). The fact that contributors' names tend to be mentioned a number of times in this overview is justification enough for the volume's deliberately multidimensional approach.

It should not surprise us to find comic elements in unusual guises or a juxtaposition of the comic and the solemn. The notion of the 'mixed' genre, in which the serious and the comic rub shoulders can be applied to the full range of medieval cultural production. A particularly striking example is that of medieval texts from the twelfth century onwards: in the epic, for instance, particularly in some of the poems of the Guillaume cycle, where the very intensity of their themes and ideals may even have lent themselves to parodic treatment; in Romance too, the psychology of love is a theme frequently punctuated by comic touches;¹⁷ or in Jean Bodel's *Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, with its mix of epic, saint's life, and tavern realism. Most — if not all — contributions to the present volume show the comedy present in the material in question to have, to some degree at least, a serious side to it. But then, is that not still the case of comedy today? Modern humorists plough their richest furrows through mocking what they perceive to be injustices, inequalities, or acts of folly. It is commonly held that an audience needs to be able to identify with a situation or character for a sketch or a joke to be most effective. And since we all lead lives strewn with what we perceive to be difficulties, absurdities, or injustices, it is logical for these domains to have the richest comic potential. Our contributors all highlight a comic presence, or the lack of one, alongside or in conjunction with a serious context, be it religious or political.

One of the most important studies of literary comic presence may be seen in the work by Philippe Ménard devoted to the place of 'le comique' in courtly

¹⁷ Indeed, two recent volumes have reminded us that humour is a fundamental characteristic of Arthurian romance, and of the broader Arthurian tradition. Cf. *Arthurian Literature*, 19 (2003) and *Arthuriana*, 14.4 (2004).

romance, typically for instance in the ironic detachment that marks the attitude of a writer such as Chrétien de Troyes towards the themes and characters of his stories.¹⁸ Other recent or often cited works offer helpful introductions to and discussions of various instances of a comic presence, in particular in aspects of medieval literature, art, and iconography, and often copiously citing Bakhtin. Many of these discussions pertain to the intersection of the comic and the serious, at least as we perceive them today. There are equally studies of parody and satire, and of the broader notions of humour, comedy, and laughter. Johan Verberckmoes's introduction to *Risus Mediaevalis: Laughter in Medieval Literature and Art* provides an extremely useful overview to the topic in general, briefly tracing how more recent scholarship has dealt with the issue and seeking out what may be specific about medieval humour. Other essays in the same volume consider the exploitation of linguistic possibilities, iconographical motifs, audience reaction, marginalia, and 'taboos' such as corpses and extreme violence. Overall, the work takes a more traditional approach than the present volume but addresses at once a narrower and yet more ambitious theoretical issue: what made medieval people laugh?¹⁹

The collection of essays entitled *Le Rire au Moyen Age dans la littérature et dans les arts* is a second indispensable volume in this field. Its title is slightly deceptive, for most of the twenty-seven essays deal with (largely French) literature, but a number of items do stand out for having implications stretching beyond the immediate topic of the essay. These include Philippe Ménard's rich introductory 'Essai de problématique', already noted above; François Garnier's study of the significance and ambivalence of body language, 'Plaisir, joie et bonheur dans l'iconographie médiévale';²⁰ and Jacques Ribard's still provocative 'Et si les fabliaux n'étaient pas des "contes à rire"?'.²¹ Discounting more theoretical volumes, other works cited by one or more contributors to the present volume include Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L'Humour en chair: le rire dans l'église médiévale*, a work whose importance will increase as the interpenetration of fields of medieval scholarship is better understood; Brian J. Levy's *The Comic Text: Patterns and Images in the Old French Fabliaux*, widely welcomed as a practical

¹⁸ Philippe Ménard, *Le Rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Age (1150–1250)* (Geneva: Droz, 1969).

¹⁹ *Risus Mediaevalis: Laughter in Medieval Literature and Art*, ed. by H. Braet, G. Latré, and W. Verbeke (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003).

²⁰ *Le Rire au Moyen Age dans la littérature et dans les arts*, pp. 193–200.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 257–68, revised and published in *Reinardus*, 2 (1989), 134–46.

study helping us to understand just what in the fabliaux a medieval audience might have found funny, and why; Michael Camille's much quoted and occasionally contentious *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, which argues that medieval art should not be seen exclusively as a sober and serious reflection of a single, pious society; Albert Lecoy de la Marche's study of humour in exempla, most recently published as *Le Rire du prédicateur*; Bernadette Rey-Flaud's examination of the comic mechanisms of medieval French farce in *La farce ou la machine à rire*; Françoise Laurent's *Plaire et édifier: les récits hagiographiques composés en Angleterre aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, a timely examination of the confluence of lay and religious culture in the early Middle Ages;²² and François Garnier's *L'Âne à la lyre: sottisier d'iconographie médiévale*, a useful reminder of how easy it is to misinterpret the intentions of our forbears.²³

A number of contributors to the present volume deal with material whose principal aim is didactic rather than comic, although 'pure' humour is still to be found. Often it is a question of comic potential, where context is everything. This notion of potential leads us, at least at first glance, into dangerous territory: how can we pretend to know what might have made our ancestors smile, let alone laugh, some five hundred years ago? This was very much the opinion of Armand Strubel, taken to task by Ménard for stating that 'il nous est, en effet, impossible d'entrer dans la psychologie du comique au Moyen Âge'.²⁴ Whilst Strubel's is a lucid and generally helpful exposition, we tend to agree with Ménard, and even more so with Derek Brewer, who wrote in the preface to his new edition of *Medieval Comic Tales*, that 'much of their [i.e. the tales'] comedy rests on human conditions we still enjoy or endure'.²⁵ This appears to us a general truth and in no way contradicts what he had written in the original introduction some twenty years previously:

The ways [a sense of humour] is embodied in jokes, stories, drama etc. are historically conditioned, and therefore variable, as is the estimation in which humour is held and

²² Françoise Laurent, *Plaire et édifier: les récits hagiographiques composés en Angleterre aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles* (Paris: Champion, 1998).

²³ François Garnier, *L'Âne à la lyre: sottisier d'iconographie médiévale* (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1988). See also Claude Gaignebet and Jean-Dominique Lajoux, *Art profane et religion populaire au moyen âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985). Dated, but still useful is 'Le rire, le comique, l'humour', special edition of *Revue d'Esthétique*, 3 (1950).

²⁴ Armand Strubel, 'Le rire au Moyen Âge', in *Précis de littérature française du Moyen Âge*, ed. by Daniel Poirion (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), pp. 186–213 (p. 186).

²⁵ Preface to *Medieval Comic Tales*, 2nd edn (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1996; orig. 1973), p. ix.

the degree to which its manifestations are studied. Whom and what we laugh at, and when, undergo considerable change.²⁶

These words would seem to vindicate fully the approach taken by the contributors to the present volume. There are many fundamental points of contact, and although fashions change, we can identify with many of the comic situations highlighted in the following pages. Brewer pointed out that a joke necessarily implies a butt, an outsider, and this is one of the variables we must overcome in order fully to understand and appreciate the humour of another age: if we accept, even against our own sensibilities, who the outsider is, then the joke may hit home.²⁷ What does change, thereby making a degree of cultural decoding necessary, is the circumstances. For example, it may be that we have divergent views as to deriving pleasure from the emotional pain of others, but then texts such as the comic fabliaux, cruel in the extreme, are not meant to be true to life any more than, say, Tom and Jerry (or even Itchy and Scratchy from *The Simpsons*), whose cartoon antics are also cruel in the extreme. There is no reason why we should either occupy a lofty position towards what we consider 'low' humour, or refrain from studying the medieval comic presence alongside other aspects of 'higher' medieval culture: iconography, philosophy, literature, theology, and so on.

The kind of laughter which may seem out of place today need not always be considered disrespectful. It was perfectly acceptable to offer a comic exemplum in a sermon in the later Middle Ages, just as it is today. And then, laughter produced by certain grotesques carved in and around a medieval church would, one presumes, occasionally lead to nervous laughter. This is a comic effect which drives home a lesson and reminds us of our own mortality. The very fact that monks would rest their backsides on misericords depicting comic scenes of worldly and otherworldly folklore makes much the same point: it shows us, as it showed them, that there is a serious side to all this fun which, let us remember, remains hidden at the solemn moments of the liturgy; namely, that God literally overcomes all. A political joke might do the same, reminding us of our place in the social pecking order. Bakhtin highlighted for us the relationship between laughter and fear, between the comic and the dreadful. Fear of death, of worldly

²⁶ Ibid., p. xii.

²⁷ For a more detailed examination of such issues, see *A Cultural History of Humour from Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. by J. Bremner, R. Dekker, and H. Roodenburg (Oxford: Polity, 1995).

and otherworldly authority, can be conquered by laughter.²⁸ On a practical level, fear and laughter were never far apart. Laughing at disability and disfunction fundamentally reveals our own relief that we are not in that predicament ourselves. A comedy of relief is still present today, even if the phrase 'Comic Relief' has taken on a new meaning in the UK. Sermons and religious art and iconography are a rich field of study for examinations of the medieval comic presence, since they provide copious, abiding testimony of how medieval society functioned in the religious space. According to Jacques Berlioz, medieval preachers had at their disposal two ways of keeping the attention of their audience:

La première est d'enseigner par la crainte, en évoquant les horreurs futures de l'enfer
[. . .] la seconde est de convaincre, non sans ruse, par le rire, ou du moins par le sourire
[. . .] Bref, il ne peut y avoir d'exemplum ennuyeux puisque sa fonction même est de rompre la monotonie du sermon.²⁹

Medieval drama and medieval church decoration similarly instruct with comic and terrifying imagery in juxtaposition. Such nervous comic unease is not, however, exclusive to the religious sphere, but may also be a feature of political and civic celebrations, such as carnival, the secular counterpart of the Feast of Fools. Given its ecclesiastical setting, the *Festa Stultorum* tends to be considered according to received wisdom as anarchistic and anticlerical, whereas in fact its apparent licence may merely be a reinforcement of a conservative ideology, sanctioned by both ecclesiastical and civic authority.

A number of the essays which follow can be considered together as showing a comic presence that challenges the received wisdom: the notion that for the Middle Ages a pissing boy is funny, that cuckolded husbands are figures of hilarity, that the archetypal medieval Jew is an unquestioned target for mockery. For any visitor to modern-day Brussels, a photo taken in front of the statue of Manneken-Pis is considered to be slightly risqué and likely to raise a smile.

²⁸ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, pp. 90–91: 'Laughter [. . .] overcomes fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations. Its idiom is never used by violence and authority. It is the victory of laughter over fear that most impressed medieval man. It was not only a victory over the mystic terror of God, but also a victory over the awe inspired by the forces of nature, and most of all over the oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden [. . .]. It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death, hell and all that is more terrifying than death itself.'

²⁹ Jacques Berlioz, Preface to Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *Le Rire du prédicateur*, pp. 6–7.

Catherine Emerson, however, demonstrates that such an image would not be expected to prompt a similar reaction in the fifteenth century. Indeed she argues that what is not a very funny joke now was never really funny in the first place. Taking as her starting point Olivier de la Marche's account of a banquet held by the Duke of Burgundy in 1454, she examines one ostensibly crude figure, which appears to draw on folk traditions of Netherlandish scatological humour. The division that we make today between 'folk' and 'high' art is artificial in the context of the Middle Ages; and the fact that the pissing infant made frequent appearances at serious ceremonial occasions throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries suggests that, however we may see it now, it was not regarded necessarily as a humorous object then.

The problem of how we read an intentionally comic text from the past is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the anonymous late fourteenth-century *Quinze joies de mariage*, whose ironic title hints at the complexity of the relationship between the young clerics who may be reading the text and the plight of the hapless married 'hero'. A less conventional approach is taken by Jean Batany, who asks whether the medical syndrome from which the husband suffers should indeed be laughed at at all. He suggests that the text might be seen rather as a cathartic case study available for husbands as presenting a figure of fun that enables them to come to terms with their own situations, because laughter is better than any more brutal solution.

Clearly the essays of both Emerson and Batany reveal a strong carnivalesque nature, and this is also a current in Elaine Block's study of the Jew in medieval misericords, which traditionally occupy the margins between the sacred and the profane. By the time the figures of Jews were carved on choir-stalls, each geographic region seems to have developed its own symbolism of this almost mythical tragi-comic figure. With his crooked nose, eyeglasses, and large hat, his association with apes and pigs, the Jew is often cruelly and satirically ridiculed, and yet occasionally, from amongst the mockery, there can emerge a surprising feeling of respect.

In some way or other, all contributors to this volume challenge the boundaries set by medieval authors and artists or, more commonly, by modern scholarship. The boundary discussed by Keith Busby is partly that between Latin and vernacular textual traditions, and also that between a number of genres. Studying Petrus Alphonsus's Latin *Disciplina Clericalis* and the Old French adaptation known as *Le Chastoiement d'un père à son fils*, he reveals an interaction, on both textual and codicological levels, between the texts in question. Busby usefully reminds us of both the Latin roots of vernacular texts and of the interplay between vernacular texts and text-types.

Alain Corbellari's analysis of a hitherto neglected group of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *Dits de métier* — close cousins of the fabliaux — prompts him to suggest that these texts may represent, not the usual tradesmen's eulogies, but rather an ironic twist on the traditional format. Their documentary value, he points out, is negligible, since they tell us little about the different trades involved. Their potential as comic texts, however, is enhanced if we regard them as the vestiges of a satirical burlesque, perhaps even the work of a single author, a kind of pre-Flaubertian 'dictionnaire des idées reçues', in which the overblown language used provides a sardonic commentary on a contemporary society that was rigidly hierarchical.

In his essay on the Old French *Vie des Pères*, Adrian Tudor seeks comic potential in what at first appears an unlikely place, namely sober, short pious narratives. But in fact these moralizing tales occupy a grey area at the confluence of a number of traditions: comic and pious, vernacular and Latin, oral and written. Reading the stories at plot level, Tudor reveals a vibrant text brimming with comic potential. Although there are numerous episodes which were undoubtedly played for laughs, and instances where the characters themselves smile and laugh, many other episodes, just a small step away from the comic fabliaux, are not comic in the slightest: it is the context of the episode, the narrative — and presumably, the performance — which decides.

Alan Hindley similarly considers the question of fluid genre divisions, but in the context of late medieval drama, in his discussion of the nature and function of 'le comique' in the late medieval corpus of religious morality plays. In their aim to bring men and women to penitence and faith, these plays used humour perhaps more often than is generally recognized — sometimes using features 'borrowed' from other contemporary play-types — not just to sugar the didactic pill, but also as a means of reducing grand theological concepts to dimensions that make them acceptable in human terms. A discussion of the theme of fools and folly in the *moralités*, and its relation to the contemporary fascination with the macabre, presents a focus for a discussion of the 'serious' humour in these plays.

Anne Cobby provides a valuable taxonomy of the many saints invoked in the Old French comic fabliaux. Building on the work of Willem Noomen, she focuses on the role of saints' names in the action and dynamic of the narratives, and concludes that calling upon the saints can both advance narrative action and also substantially contribute to a work's artistic and comic effect. She reminds us of our alterity with the Middle Ages, noting that it is not always easy or possible for the modern reader to appreciate the extent to which the choice of a saint or the circumstances of an invocation enrich the narrative.

‘Unlikely humour’ is another field highlighted by our contributors. By this we understand material traditionally perceived as dry, and certainly not conducive to studies of the comic, but which can be given an unexpected comic twist. Thus Lesley Coote’s analysis of a version of the Middle English epic romance of *Richard Coeur de Lyon* illustrates that whilst the text demonizes the historical twelfth-century personage as a monster, as we might expect, it at the same time introduces a degree of ambivalence into the portrait of the hero. This is marked by laughter which both affirms the inevitability that the good ruler will also be the tyrant king, but also offers the audience a temporary respite from their realization of this truth. As Coote puts it: ‘to laugh is, briefly, both to affirm and to forget.’

This phenomenon of unlikely humour is not limited just to texts but also to objects of routine medieval bureaucracy. A simple seal can thus transcend the usual hackneyed wordplay peculiar to medieval heraldry to reach more subtle proportions, as in a charter in the deed collection of Durham Cathedral Priory, discussed by David Crouch. Subverting expectations, the seal of Geoffrey L’Abbé of Leicestershire shows the trappings of military pursuit replaced by those of episcopal status, a pun on his name L’Abbé: a clever visual joke, depending on an understanding of the words of the seal’s legend in the context of an increasingly literate twelfth-century knighthood.

Our late and much missed colleague Gianni Mombello takes a broader view by tracing a narrative motif from Cicero until the early modern period which continued to be effective in its various guises. Cicero is not commonly reputed to be a humorous writer, but the joke drawn from his *De oratore* selected by Mombello for discussion here gave rise to a whole series of comic rewritings. Mombello’s study could be said to allay any concerns we may have about the universal appeal of comic taste. The details of this particular joke may change, but the substance remains the same, and although it is perhaps in the variations that we find the most interest, we still find the joke funny today.

Late medieval church wall paintings would not necessarily be the most obvious first port of call in the search for a medieval sense of fun. Axel Bolvig, however, notes that since they are connected to spoken vernacular and not to a written text, they can sometimes present a humorous, even an anti-authoritarian, attitude towards official writing and teaching. One instance of this is St Lawrence joking during his martyrdom. In order to understand the image of St Lawrence, we must consider ‘the big picture’, that is, the entire decorative programme within the church. Bolvig concludes that just because the mural features in a holy space does not exclude an intentional comic presence, to be understood

by anyone who can read, or have read for them, the inscription: ‘assatus sum commedite’.

It is not surprising to find the phenomenon of Carnival featuring in this volume, and Jean-Marc Pastré offers a clear illustration in his discussion of the fifteenth-century German *Fastnachtspiele*. In this theatre of folly, the urban middle classes could enjoy watching scenes of mock trials and tribulations, drawing upon the stock double entendre of sex and scatology. In the collective euphoria of carnival’s coarse verbal excesses, the oppressed spectator could be temporarily liberated from the hardships of daily life.

If ever there was a case study for the theme of this volume, then it is the vast collection of texts relating the adventures of Reynard the Fox. Reynard is the archetypal figure of medieval European *mouvance*, with his shifting *persona* and myriad reinventions. One of the more problematic shifts, but also one of the richest sources of humour, is that of the interrelationship between the animal and human worlds. This comic motif is highlighted in the contributions by both Kenneth Varty and Jeanette Beer. The ambiguous nature of the duality of Reynard’s character — Is he good or is he bad? Is he a comic or a serious figure? — is raised by Paul Wackers; whilst the contentious issue of the ambiguity arising from the disparate nature of the texts is the subject of Mary Jane Schenck’s essay. James Simpson, for his part, examines the relationship between language, embodiment, and sexuality.

Kenneth Varty’s essay on the French *Roman de Renart* draws attention to episodes where protagonists pass back and forth between a society in which they are more animal than human and a society in which they are more human than animal. In particular, Varty considers some of the comic techniques employed in the process of distancing the reader-listener from the protagonists, enabling them to be amusing even when they act violently. Always supposing, of course, that violence in itself is not funny.

In her historico-codicological treatment of various branches of the *Roman de Renart*, Mary Jane Schenck is able to offer some new perspectives on the rape of Hersent in the context of the Renart stories. In considering how the choices of the compiler of a particular manuscript may reflect not just literary values but also the legal and historical context of the time of compilation, she uses the disunity of the texts as a window on a period when law and justice, custom and morality diverge.

Turning to the Dutch Reynardian tradition, Paul Wackers equally posits that the only way to give meaning to tales with animal protagonists is to link them with the human world. In his survey of the debate as to whether in *Van den vos*

Reynaerde the fox is primarily an evil or a comic character, he concludes that modern scholars have difficulty in interpreting medieval animal epics, since the medieval author does not always state his intentions clearly and explicitly. The ‘intellectual puzzle’ of decoding the medieval stories can also probably account for their popularity in modern times: in these stories we can see both the failings and follies of other people and, more uncomfortably, the comic side of our own darker tendencies.

Taking the episode of *Renard et Bertot*, the peasant who comes off badly in a confrontation with Renart, James Simpson examines the representation of the peasant, a generally dull figure in the Old French corpus. The encounter of the two characters in question enables the exploitation of a range of opportunities for comedy and irony. Simpson notes that one of the most remarkable aspects of comic presence is its dependence on what is left unsaid or is anticipated.

The ambivalent didacticism of Richard de Fournival’s *Bestiaire d’amour*, composed in the first half of the thirteenth century, is the subject of Jeanette Beer’s essay. When the author reinterpreted the animal symbolism of the Latin *Physiologus*-derived bestiaries as erotica, the resulting love-bestiary was comically ambiguous in its message. For example, Richard uses the fox (‘goupil’) to warn his lady against other male suitors; she on the other hand, when given voice in an anonymous continuation known as the *Réponse*, composed before 1285, finds no cogency in his argumentation. In changing the first syllable of Richard’s name (from ‘Richard’ to ‘Renard’, a synonym of ‘goupil’) she wittily projects upon the author of the *Bestiaire* all the negative traits of the literary/mythical fox.

The final contribution encapsulates the interdisciplinary approach adopted in this volume, whilst at the same time bringing us back to its dedicatee. Frédéric Billiet draws our attention to a serendipitous find he, Brian, and Elaine Block made in one of the two magnificent medieval churches gracing Brian’s home town of Beverley. Hidden in the choir stalls of St Mary’s, with their mid-fifteenth-century misericords, is a carving of two foxes singing from a manuscript copy of the Magnificat. In a church dedicated to the Virgin, what could be more serious than an image of the song she sang at the Visitation? This juxtaposition of precise musical notion related to a key liturgical event with the upside down world of *renardie* is remarkable. It certainly leaves us with a puzzle which remains to be solved, a reminder to all of us of the continuing complexity of the Medieval Comic Presence.

The specific task we set our contributors was to identify aspects of a medieval comic presence which are, for whatever reason, unexpected, unusual, ambivalent,

or downright odd. It is, of course, always important to bear in mind the expectations of an audience, the method of delivery of a joke, the comic effect desired by an author, artist, or performer: in short, as has by now become abundantly clear, context is everything. We are mindful that it is always hazardous to write about humour at all: the topic seems to have a long bibliography of often dense and occasionally brilliant works, some of which make for a decidedly dull read. By leaving the fundamental *problématique* to others we hope to have avoided that pitfall. Our contributors provide invaluable snapshots of medieval society and culture, snapshots offering fascinating glimpses of what made, or did not make, the Middle Ages laugh. The volume may even provide a few smiles itself. Having read the essays which follow, the reader will not only have acquired a greater insight into the subtleties, contradictions, and ambiguities of the medieval comic presence, but also appreciated something of the character of the volume's remarkable dedicatee.

THE PUBLISHED WORKS OF BRIAN J. LEVY: AN ANALYTICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kate L. Boardman

To write a bibliography of a scholar as prolific as Brian Levy is no small undertaking. Within the list that follows there number monographs, editions, edited volumes, and numerous articles and reviews. Much of this output shows a tireless dedication to the often thankless task of structuring and presenting others' work to the wider world. Two items in his bibliography in particular exemplify this. First, Brian contributed to the MHRA *Year's Work in Modern Language Studies* for over twenty years, initially as author of the Early Medieval French Literature section, then as editor of the sizeable Romance and Celtic Languages and Literatures section. Subsequently, he edited with Paul Wackers eighteen volumes of *Reinardus*, the Yearbook of the International Reynard Society. He brimmed with enthusiasm when helping organize conferences, when chairing sessions, or when contributing to discussions, and was especially keen to engage with younger scholars new to the conference circuit. He would often encourage them to submit articles to *Reinardus* or elsewhere and offer help on the way to publication. Although not always recognized as one of the more distinguished roles of the modern-day academic, Brian quite properly saw his unforgiving editorial duties as central to his role as researcher and teacher.

Brian's publication record spans four decades. His earliest publication, 'Waltheof, earl de Huntigdon et de Northampton: la naissance d'un héros anglo-normand', traces the legend surrounding the figure of Waltheof, executed by William the Conqueror to make an example of the highest ranking nobleman implicated in the revolt of the North. Déjà vu, perhaps? Could he have foreseen, thirty-or-so years later, that along with Pierre Bouet he would so expertly weave together the splendid volume of scholarship on the history and legends of the most famous Anglo-Saxon nobleman dispatched by William? *La Tapisserie de*

Bayeux: l'art de broder l'histoire was to be Brian's last volume and was one of which he was immensely proud. Some five years in production, it is destined to become a seminal work in Bayeux Tapestry studies. As a single object, the Bayeux Tapestry encapsulates all the aspects of research that Brian concerned himself with over his career.

Brian's interests were nothing if not eclectic. His publications include editions of Old French and Anglo-Norman texts, intended both for the specialist scholar and for the student encountering these texts for the first time. His studies of a variety of aspects of these and other texts abound, although he always seemed to come back to the comic: who else could find a comic element in the Bayeux Tapestry or the Hereford Mappamundi? His interest in issues relating to performance and reception provided another constant throughout his career. This interest was not merely academic: he played a starring role in a number of dramatic pieces filmed at the University of Hull in the 1970s and 1980s, and very recently recorded a double CD of Old French pious and comic tales. At the end of his life Brian's interests managed to bring together his two great passions: medieval literature and culture on the one hand, and the cinema on the other. His course entitled 'The Middle Ages Go to the Movies', taught with Lesley Coote from the Hull English Department, was continually over-subscribed. Epic, beast epic, romance, comic fabliau, pious tale, lyric, historiography, the Great War, French cinema, filmic adaptations of medieval texts . . .

How to classify such an output? Listing a bibliography solely by publication date really shows little but its sheer volume and denies the reader the fullest opportunity to appreciate the range of Brian's work. To be thematic, then? Almost equally difficult, as there are a number of overlapping commonalities, and a number of publications could fit in more than one potential category. But this is the approach chosen here: Brian's main work is presented below under headings of 'Comic and Cautionary', 'Anglo-Norman Studies', and 'Epic and Romance'. There is a separate classification for 'Film Studies', and some work which does not sit happily in any of the above is considered 'Miscellaneous'. Brian's collaborations with Alan Hindley in teaching medieval French are collated as 'Language', preceding the list of 'Bibliographical', and 'Book Reviews'. Brian's output across these categories is evenly spread throughout his career. This bibliography at once demonstrates his intimate knowledge of a chosen field and his expertise in all facets of scholarly publishing, from the editing and translating of devotional and liturgical texts to the sexual perversion of the fabliaux, from the striking plot-line of the tale of *De l'Ermite et du Jongleur* to the cinematic deployment of *Ars poetriae* rhetoric in Robert Bresson's 1974 *Lancelot du Lac*.

This bibliography was intended to be a celebration of past, present, and future research. Brian's future projects were to include a monograph entitled *A Poet for All Seasons: Rutebeuf and the Literature of Thirteenth-Century France*, a critical bibliography of Rutebeuf scholarship, and further articles on the fabliaux and film studies. One collaborative project — a volume with Lesley Coote on the Middle Ages and the Cinema — will still go ahead. Although there are a number of items awaiting publication *in memoriam*, it is with great regret that Brian's bibliography is now all but complete, although his scholarly legacy will continue for many years to come.

Comic and Cautionary

Brian's first published work in this category is a teaching edition of twelve *Selected Fabliaux*, with notes by C. E. Pickford. Later publications concentrate on a single humorous aspect in the fabliau tradition: the role of the devil; the 'indecent cavorting' of victims led astray by dancing; severe illness; and the comic potential of family confrontations. To this can be added the associated vices of gambling and sexual deviancy and the role (often obscene) of animals in the comic tale alongside the 'bestly' behaviour of the human characters. Many of these aspects are brought together and explored in more detail in his seminal 2000 monograph, *The Comic Text*, a close analysis of key images which develop into the themes and motifs of the fabliaux — the 'small print' of the joke.

An early study considers fabliaux in insular exempla collections, notably Nicholas Bozon's *Metaphorae*. Brian latterly moved on to explore in more detail the question of narrative performance, bringing them to life with Adrian Tudor in *Ribaudie et Repentanche*, recorded readings of twelve fabliaux and three pious tales in an Old French language accessible to modern readers, with notes on possible performance. Brian insisted that these recordings were not linguistic aids but were to illustrate how a medieval jongleur or reader might 'tell a good yarn'.

Anglo-Norman Studies

Further work on Nicholas Bozon can be found throughout Brian's work in Anglo-Norman Studies. In 1981 he published *Nine Verse Sermons* by Bozon, detailed commentaries on a series of short poems. Each poem takes a moralizing theme — divine light, heaven and hell, gossiping women, the vanity of material things — which most likely originated as one of Bozon's sermons.

After collaboration with D. L. Jeffrey on *The Anglo-Norman Lyric*, the edition, translation, and full commentary of fifty poems — devotional and liturgical texts, homilies, and social and domestic pieces — Brian returned once more to Bozon. ‘Images mondaines et allégorie édifiante chez Nicole Bozon’ underlines the preacher-poet’s very Franciscan ability to link his homilies to material elements of secular life. Of particular importance is his allegorical imagery of the hunt, of the banquet, and of a knight’s arms and armour. Such carefully penned illustrations of the preoccupations and obsessions of Anglo-Norman society are also revealed in “‘Honor” et “honneur”: Le rôle du château-foyer dans deux romans lignagers anglo-normands’ and in ‘The Image of the Viking in Old French and Anglo-Norman Literature’, studies of insular romance texts.

Epic and Romance

Brian collaborated with Alan Hindley to bring together *The Old French Epic: An Introduction*, a survey of themes and motifs in the *chansons de geste*, illustrated by selected extracts with detailed commentaries. This same collaboration also produced an edition of a romance text: Jehan Renart’s *Le Lay de l’Ombre*. Brian also published ‘Les Trois Fonctions dans le rythme narratif de la Tapisserie de Bayeux’ in *La Tapisserie de Bayeux*, the volume he prized so much. Battle was joined over the epic features of the Bayeux Tapestry by C. Dodwell and Brian happily added further material to the debate in this examination of trifunctionality and epic patterning.

Film Studies

In recent studies — reminiscent of other work on the performance of the fabliaux — Brian considers the way in which the Middle Ages have been filmed or, as he understood it, framed by twentieth-century directors with contemporary agendas. The various images, objects, and motifs deployed in *Les Visiteurs du soir* (Michel Carné, 1942) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Michael Curtiz, 1938) are also brought to an undergraduate audience through ‘The Middle Ages Go to the Movies’ a series of teaching materials using the Web, incorporating films (old and new), medieval texts, images, and social background. This combination of media was prefigured in 1986 by *An Epic Production*, a video presentation of the *Chanson de Roland* offering also an explanation of the selection and use of illustrations.

Language

Arguably the publication which will be long used and reused by students and scholars is the *Old French–English Dictionary*, produced with Alan Hindley and Frederick W. Langley. The fruit of early experiments with new technologies (see below), the dictionary is the first of its kind and was met with enthusiasm by colleagues worldwide. The dictionary provides a suitable legacy for Brian, for it is eminently practical, not seeking to emulate or challenge Tobler-Lommatzch or Godefroy but to fill a long-standing gap for anglophone students of Old French as a first port of call.

New Technologies

New technology is an important and perhaps less obvious theme running through Brian's work. In the listings below are a number of publications or references to further work in a different medium: the *biblia pauporum* of today's digital age. As early as 1986, Brian was working on a computer-assisted Old French / English Dictionary, and the cognate language tutor *MedFrench* has been invaluable to undergraduate and graduate students alike. With the advent of the World Wide Web, Brian created and maintained the Web site of the International Reynard Society and also Misericordia International.

Brian's teaching using technology received national acclaim. His 'The Middle Ages Go to the Movies', taught with colleague Lesley Coote, were delivered through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Blackboard™, and he was in demand to demonstrate their good practice at other universities. Such innovative use of e-learning has helped to bring medieval studies into the twenty-first century and attracted a new generation of young scholars to follow in his footsteps. As I wrote in the conclusion to my MA dissertation, supervised by Brian:

Facsimiles and texts with click-on translations and glossaries may well open the doors of the Middle Ages for many would-be medievalists. Just as the 'new technology' of stained glass windows made the old stories come alive for the populace of medieval yesterday, now our new technologies can also enhance the understanding and admiration of a new populace today. In fact, it may be as well to consider the eye strain caused by reading text on screen akin to the neck strain surely felt by the faithful, craning up to decipher sections of window, as well as to remember the growth and success of that 'new technology'.¹

¹ Kate L. Boardman, 'Modern Technology and Medieval Studies: Can Multimedia Enhance the Study of Medieval Manuscripts' (MA Dissertation, University of Hull, 1995).

Conclusion

This 'updating of the text', a global re-evaluation of Anglo-Norman Studies, Epic, Romance, and the Comic and Cautionary of the fabliaux for those who are to follow Brian, is a contribution to medieval studies as important as each individual work listed below. It is indeed sad that *La Tapisserie de Bayeux*, intended to be a 'grand ouvrage de luxe' is not — as was originally intended — accompanied by a CD-ROM providing scrolling and zoomable images, glossaries, histories, commentaries, and comparative material all in the most up-to-date and accessible frame possible. This would have provided a symbiosis of images, text, performance, technology, epic, comic, language, marginal decoration, and filmic quality to summarize perfectly Brian's career and publication record. It would also have given Brian, ever the distinguished scholar with a boyish sense of humour and excitement, another toy to show off.

Comic and Cautionary

(ed., with notes by C. E. Pickford) *Selected Fabliaux* (Hull: Hull French Texts, 1978).

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'Vrai bonheur, bonheur illusoire des fabliaux', in *L'Idée de bonheur au moyen âge: Actes du Colloque du Centre d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie, Amiens 22–25 mars 1984* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1985), pp. 281–92.

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- ‘Performing Fabliaux’, in *Performing Medieval Narrative*, ed. by M. Lawrence, N. Regalado, and E. B. Vitz (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), pp. 123–40.
- ‘Or escoutez une merveille! Parallel Paths: Gautier de Coinci and the Fabliaux’, in *Gautier de Coinci, Les Miracles de Notre Dame: Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. by Kathy M. Krause and Alison Stones, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming)

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Not a Laughing Matter

ARE YOU TAKING THE PISS(E)?
EARLY APPEARANCES OF THE URINATING BOY
IN THE LOW COUNTRIES AND NORTHERN FRANCE

Catherine Emerson

En celle salle avoit trois tables couvertes, l'une moyenne, l'autre grande et l'autre petite; sur la moyenne avoit une eglise croisée, voirrée et faicte de gente façon, où il y avoit une cloche sonnante et quatre chantes. Il y avoit ung aultre entremectz d'ung petit enfant tout nu sur une roche, qui pissoit eue rose continuellement. Ung aultre entremectz y avoit, d'une caraque ancrée, garnie de toute marchandise et de personnaiges de mariniers, et ne me semble point qu'en la plus grant caraque du monde ayt plus d'ouvraiges ne de manieres de cordes et voilles, qu'il y en avoit en ceste. Ung aultre entremectz y avoit d'une moult belle fontaine, dont une partie estoit de voirre et l'autre de plomb, de très nouvel ouvrage, car il y avoit petit arbriceaulx de voirre, feuilles et fleurs si nouvellement faictes qu'à merveilles; et l'espace de l'artifice estoit ainsi comme ung petit preloz de roches de saphistrins et d'autres estranges pierres, et au milieu d'icelluy avoit ung petit saint Andrieux tout droit, ayant sa croix devant luy, et par l'ung des bouts de la croix sourdoit la fontaine, ung grant pied de haulteur, et recheoit dedans le prelo par si subtile maniere, que l'on ne sçavoit que l'eau devenoit.¹

Thus, almost unnoticed, the statue of a naked child urinating rose water slips in amongst the other images gracing the ducal table at Lille in February 1454. It is difficult to know what to make of the statue, particularly given what seems to be the religious import of other table decorations — the Church and St Andrew — and the paucity of words devoted to the child appear to denote a similar sense of unease on the part of the narrator. The statue of the urinating boy does not attract the same praise for its craftsmanship lavished on

¹ Olivier de La Marche, *Mémoires*, ed. by Henri Beaune and Jean d'Arbaumont, 4 vols (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 1883–88), II (1884), 349–50.

the other decorations, and the description of the audience reaction is also missing. It would almost seem as if the fifteenth-century narrator regards the child and its actions as being an unwelcome comic intrusion into what is otherwise serious iconography. However, this analysis does not do justice to the circumstances in which the infant found himself in 1454 — circumstances so bizarre that they have led some scholars to question whether the entire occasion was itself simply a big joke.

The banquet held by Philippe le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, in February 1454 had an ostensibly serious purpose — to raise support for an attempt to recapture Constantinople, which had fallen to a Turkish army in the previous year. However, in the account of the banquet which circulated subsequently, this purpose was not revealed until well into the festivities when Olivier de La Marche, organizer of the banquet and probable author of the account, appeared dressed as a woman and riding in a castle on the back of an elephant to announce that he was Holy Mother Church and that the audience should do what they could to save Her.² Prior to this point, apparently comic elements had abounded: one table decoration depicted a madman riding a bear, another showed a wild man riding a camel, and yet another had a group of villagers training their ballistic weapons on a magpie. The entertainment, too, had had its comic aspects: presenting scenes such as a monster with the legs and claws of a vulture and the upper body of a man, or a duet performed by a young boy and a singing deer, all interspersed with scenes from the legend of Jason which may have been acted out but were more likely presented in puppet form. Even once the crusading intent of the occasion had been announced, the proceedings did not grow noticeably more solemn: the announcement was followed by the production of a live pheasant, and the Duke and many noblemen present took the opportunity to swear a series of extravagant vows to the bird to undertake the journey to the Holy Land. The nature of a number of these vows has suggested to some that they were not to be taken seriously.³ Jean de Rebremettes, for example, vowed that he would go on the expedition and that ‘se je ne joys point de ma dame entre cy et le voyage, que

² Apart from La Marche's *Mémoires*, the account of the Banquet of the Pheasant appears in the *Chronique* of Matthieu d'Escouchy and in three anonymous manuscript sources. A full account appears in Catherine Emerson, 'Who Witnessed and Narrated the *Banquet of the Pheasant* (1454)? A Codicological Examination of the Account's Five Versions', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 28 (2003), 124–37.

³ Agathe Lafortune-Martel, in *Fête noble en Bourgogne au XV^e siècle. 'Le Banquet du faisan' (1454): Aspects politiques, sociaux et culturels* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1984), p. 132, comments that 'il y en a, parmi les convives, qui semblent s'être donné le mot pour rire'.

la première dame ou damoiselle qui avera vingt mille escus, je la prenray en mariage se elle veult'.⁴ And yet it seems that the men making the vows took them seriously enough: many of them did participate in a subsequent abortive crusade, and away from the banquet, other vows were collected from nobles whose excuses of poverty and infirmity suggest that they at least believed the crusade to be a serious proposition.⁵

In this context, where modern readers are uncertain as to whether to regard the Banquet of the Pheasant as a comic or a serious occasion, details such as the urinating boy are frequently marshalled in evidence as pointers to the overall tone of the event. Yet, in the case of the urinating boy, our interpretation is hampered by modern preconceptions which shape the way we see the child and encourage a comic reading that may not have suggested itself to a medieval audience. Perhaps the most significant of these is the fact that the urinating child at the Banquet of the Pheasant seems to be the twin of Manneken-Pis, the famous Brussels fountain depicting the same subject. The form in which the modern viewer encounters Manneken-Pis — the statue — dates back to 1619 and, in the intervening years, it has developed a popular following attested by its appearance on humorous postcards and by the profusion of souvenir shops in the streets surrounding the 60 cm fountain.⁶ Indeed, such is the place of Manneken-Pis within popular culture that it has taken on the status of the mascot of the city in which it resides, the target of kidnap plots from students in other university towns.⁷ This sort of popular appeal invites the modern commentator to view Manneken-Pis within a dichotomy opposing popular culture to high culture. In this context, the appearance of the urinating boy at the Banquet of the Pheasant

⁴ Mathieu d'Escouchy, *Chronique*, ed. by G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, 3 vols (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 1863–64), II (1863), 220.

⁵ Such excuses were especially prevalent in Hainaut, where the vow of Lyon de Sars is not atypical: 'Lyon de sars a tout son temps seruy a son leal pouoir en haynnau en france et en liege et tant quil en est affole en sa destre main par quoy il ne pourroit tenir lance nespee Et sy est sy ancien que de lx ans. Auec ce pour la guerre de namur et de liege il a eu de grans pertes et tant quil lui a conueni vendre vne terre quil auoit oudit pays. Si prie *que* par tant on soit content de luy.' Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fonds français 11594, fol. 125.

⁶ Particularly striking examples of the sorts of postcards associated with Manneken-Pis are to be found at <<http://www.kodakgirl.com/epostcardsmanpis.htm>>. The topos of the woman, often a young girl or an old maid, who receives her sexual education from viewing the urinating statuette is standard in the humorous literature surrounding Manneken-Pis.

⁷ For example that carried out by the students of the 'Wikingen', a fraternity associated with the University of Antwerp on the night of 16–17 January 1963.

seems to be a folk motif in a court setting and thereby inherently humorous, given the conflicting registers on which we expect the two traditions to draw.

And yet modern scholars should be wary of a simple schematization which sees 'high' and 'low' culture as binary opposites and maps this opposition onto the urban landscape of the late Middle Ages. Similarly, we should beware of interpreting the urinating child at the Banquet of the Pheasant as being simply a Manneken-Pis or of assuming that this figure had the same meaning for a fifteenth-century viewer as it does for the modern spectator. On the one hand, it seems that the figure at the banquet may have been regarded in the Manneken-Pis tradition: the fountain appears to have been a landmark in Brussels from at least 1452.⁸ However, there is very little to indicate that it was regarded as an expression of 'low' or popular culture. Mikail Bakhtin reminds us that, since the Middle Ages, people have had a tendency to regard images emphasizing the relationship between the body and the physical world (such as those of eating or of defecation) as grotesque in a way that a medieval spectator would not have done. There is, therefore, no need to identify the motif of the urinating child with low culture simply because of the content of the motif.

Concomitantly it is not necessary to situate the Manneken-Pis motif in a context of high or low culture to determine whether or not it should be read as a humorous object. The presupposition that high culture is serious and that comic culture cannot therefore achieve the same status does not seem to hold true in the context of fifteenth-century Burgundy. A case in point is the series of sadistic practical jokes awaiting the unsuspecting visitor to the ducal castle at Hesdin. These were effects produced by expensive automata, the production of which was personally supervised by Philippe le Bon. They included a bridge that collapsed as unsuspecting victims crossed and a system of pipes and vents out of which issued water to wet passing women from below or substances such as flour and soot to cover all who came too close.⁹ The physical nature of the treatment intended for those entering the room in which the automata were situated appears to be the lowest of low humour. However, there were facets of the entertainment which — were one to accept the validity of distinctions between high and low culture — would seem to be part of aristocratic cultural norms

⁸ For details surrounding the documents attesting to this earliest appearance, see below.

⁹ For the full discomfort of the treatment meted out to visitors to Hesdin, see Michel Brunet, 'Le Parc d'attractions des ducs de Bourgogne à Hesdin', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 78:1235 (1971), 331–42, and B. Danvin, *Vicissitudes heur et malheur du vieil-Hesdin* (Saint-Pol: Bécard-Renard, 1866), pp. 131–34.

rather than those of lower sections of society. Indeed, it could be argued that the fact that the entertainment was planned by the Duke for guests to his residence meant that it was an exclusively aristocratic form of humour. But even beyond the social rank of the prospective participants in activities at Hesdin, some practical jokes explicitly addressed the interests of a literate aristocratic audience. Thus, one of the occasions for covering victims with soot or water was brought about by the presence of a 'livre de balades' on a lectern, which blackened would-be readers when they approached it and soaked them when they attempted to open it. This presupposed a literate audience with an interest in the poetic culture of court, comparable to that found in the court of Charles d'Orléans where visitors were invited to contribute to their host's book of ballads and rondeaux. At the very root of the slapstick of Hesdin, therefore, was presumed participation in aristocratic culture. Not only does this mean that a fifteenth-century audience had little perception of what we might regard as the differences between high and low culture but, in fact, it seems that the one could be inherent in the other.

We should not, therefore, regard humour and high aristocratic culture as incompatible with each other in the fifteenth-century, but this fact does not in itself mean that the presence of a urinating boy on the table at the Banquet of the Pheasant should be interpreted in a comic light. Instead, we should look to other appearances of the urinating boy motif to understand how it was viewed in late medieval Low Countries society and to determine what the horizon of expectation of the spectator at the Banquet of the Pheasant would have been. These appearances frequently share with the 1454 Lille festivity an elaborate carnivalesque setting that eludes interpretation by the modern spectator by virtue of its very strangeness. However, the complexity of the iconography surrounding the urinating boy motif can serve as a key to the nature — whether comic or otherwise — of the motif itself, providing clues to the overall tone of the festival and therefore to the role of the child within it.

Statues of urinating boys are, in fact, not infrequent participants in civic occasions in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and they are often accompanied (at a greater or lesser degree of proximity) by another motif expressing corporality in fountain form: that of the woman (or women) from whose breasts issues an endless supply of liquid. Such a statue appeared at the Banquet of the Pheasant ('une image de femme nue, qui les cheveux avoit si longs, qu'ilz la couvroient par derriere jusques aux rains, [. . .] et gectoit cest ymage, par la mamelle droite, ypcoras, autant que le soupper dura').¹⁰ Similarly, a persistent

¹⁰ Olivier de La Marche, *Mémoires*, II, 354.

legend has it that the statue of the Three Graces which once stood in Brussels in the Marché-des-Tripes, not far from Manneken-Pis, replaced an earlier fountain depicting lactating women (which, in many versions of the story, are said in turn to have replaced urinating women).¹¹ Such statues provide the most obvious context in which to situate urinating boy fountains and can on a most basic level be seen as an attempt to integrate the stream of water and the human figure in a unifying narrative. As such, they are comparable to fountains depicting animals with jets of water issuing from their mouths. The lactating women in particular can be seen in the context of a tradition which assimilates breast milk to liberality and abundance, recalling the practice (still followed today in the case of Manneken-Pis) of using such fountains to distribute alcohol to the populace during times of festivity. It might seem that the figure of the urinating boy fits less easily into this reading, since the fluid denoted in this portrayal does not have the attractions of mother's milk. However, Marc Lanval, in a psycho-sociological reading from 1953, advances the theory that the iconography of both the urinating boy and the lactating woman stems from the same impulse — to impress upon a pre-literate medieval society the value of a scarce water supply through a comparison of the water supplied in drinking fountains with bodily fluids. Lanval points to the fact that 'le pipi du petit Jésus' is an expression designating pale liquids of high quality and — whether or not we accept his conclusion that this is the origin of the motif — the urinating boy frequently fulfils the same role of drinking fountain as his lactating older sisters.

Such, indeed, was the case in one of the earliest appearances of the urinating boy motif, that present at the solemn entry of Philippe le Bon and Charles d'Orléans into the city of Bruges in 1440. At this occasion the liquid issuing from the urinating child was hypocras, which was to be the drink flowing from the breasts of the female fountain at the banquet at Lille over a decade later. At

¹¹ This legend is discussed in Marc Lanval's *L'Enigme du Manneken-Pis* (Brussels: Éditions du Laurier, 1953), pp. 15–16. Lanval seems to prefer the lactating women to the idea of urinating women although it should be noted that a female counterpart to Manneken-Pis is a popular idea and has been brought into being in recent years by Denis Adrien Debouvrie, who commissioned the squatting figure of Jeanneke Pis in 1985. The triple lactating fountain may or may not have existed. In 1776, a competition was launched to design a statue depicting three classical goddesses, 'destinées à orner la Fontaine dite des *Trois Pucelles*' (Brussels, Archives de la ville de Bruxelles, Liasse 465, 1776–87). The documents in the archive trace the uncomfortable history of the ensuing competition, which generated a winner in the form of François Janssens, who then failed to produce a satisfactory statue and was eventually paid a sum from the city of Brussels in return for not completing the work.

Bruges, too, the urinating boy appeared in close proximity to a lactating lady, although the symbolism used here was less abstract and the liquid emerging from her breast (or breasts, depending on which account of the occasion one is more inclined to believe) was milk. In fact, the relationship between the depiction of urination and that of lactation also changes according to the account one reads. Both the anonymous *Kronyck van Vlaenderen van 580 tot 1467* and Nicolaes Despars's *Chronijcke van den lande ende graefsepe van Vlaenderen, van de jaeren 405 tot 1492* are in agreement that the statue of the figure urinating hypocras appeared towards the end of the procession, immediately before a tableau depicting the liberation of St Peter from prison which stood in front of the city gaol.¹² Following this scene, the procession encountered another fountain, in the centre of which was the lactating statue. This was flanked by fountains supplying red and white wine, which are not described in the anonymous account but which, in Despars's version, take the form of further urinating figures: a 'zotkin' (a fool) pissing Rhine wine and a wild man from whose penis red wine poured continuously. Thus, in the solemn entry of 1440 we have the presence of at least one and possibly three urinating figures, together with a considerable quantity of iconography which might cast some light on the degree to which these figures were regarded in a comic light. We also have the rare opportunity afforded by two similar but distinct descriptions of the same event, one of which is not only more detailed than the other but more explicit in its interpretation of the iconography of the occasion: unusually for a medieval author describing a festive occasion, Nicolaes Despars tells his audience not merely what there was to see at the event but what this image was intended to mean in the context of the ceremony at hand. So, for Despars, the story of the miraculous liberation of St Peter from prison was not simply a reference to the New Testament but was intended to strike a parallel with the circumstances in which Charles d'Orléans found himself in Bruges, having been recently freed from the clutches of the English through the intervention of his host Philippe le Bon. Many of the tableaux in the triumphal entry receive the same treatment in Despars's account, allowing us to formulate a detailed iconography of the event.

¹² The two accounts of the 1440 entry referred to in this article are found in *Kronyck van Vlaenderen, van 580 tot 1467*, ed. by C. P. Serrure and others, 2 vols (Gent: Maetschappy der Vlaemsche Bibliophilen, 1839–40), II (1940), 107–11, and Nicolaes Despars, *Cronijcke van den lande ende graefsepe van Vlaenderen, van de jaeren 405 tot 1492* ed. by J. de Jonghe, 4 vols (Bruges, 1839), II, 429–42.

The images present in Bruges in 1440 are mainly depictions of Old and New Testament characters and events with some scenes taken from non-biblical Christian tradition. Throughout the described procession these scenes are interspersed with music and with displays of secular power such as the exhibition of coats of arms, the appearance of delegations of merchants from various cities, and the presentation of the keys of Bruges to the entering princes. All the fountains, including the urinating ones, appear towards the end of the procession and they seem to introduce a new iconographical tone into the festivity in which religious imagery had hitherto predominated. This change of tone may be the conscious result of a structure which was conceived to culminate in the imagery incarnated by the fountains but it may equally be the consequence of the physical setting of the procession which, by its nature as a triumphant entry, moved from outside the city to the central urban space, where fountains were more likely to predominate. Certainly in Brussels the fountains which dispensed refreshment at such civic festivals were usually pre-existing fountains, and the 1440 Bruges entry appears to have taken the same approach, placing a tableau of mermen and sea warriors in the basin of the fountain in the market-place. It is therefore not reasonable to argue that the placing of the fountains at the end of the procession signals a conscious move from the religious to the secular sphere, since there may have been other factors governing the order in which the elements were presented, and the culminating point of the festivity as a whole was the unequivocally religious image of the Transfiguration. However, there remains a difference between the treatment accorded to the religious tableaux and that devoted to the secular imagery surrounding fountains which can legitimately be read as signalling a different understanding of the two sorts of iconography.

The most obvious point of difference between the two sorts of iconography lies in the level of gloss provided by the fifteenth-century reporters. Religious imagery is accompanied by biblical quotation in Latin — even if the imagery itself is of a non-specific sort which peoples the streets of Bruges with unnamed Old Testament prophets and non-biblical characters such as the parents of the Virgin Mary. The content of the Latin quotations suggests a straightforward association between the concept of *dominus* in these texts and the person of Philippe le Bon, viewed as legal lord of Bruges.¹³ In the case of the biblical

¹³ Whilst the staging of lordly authority in the accounts of the 1440 entry to Bruges is mainly based on an equivalence between Philippe le Bon and God, or Christ, the iconography of overlordship does not limit itself to the divine. In one tableau, the intervention of Queen Esther to her husband on behalf of the suffering Jewish people is depicted as a model for that

tableaux, but not of the other scenes of non-biblical religious traditions, this association is formalized in the comments of Nicolaes Despars who points out, for example, that the characters of both John the Baptist and Job were intended as representations of Bruges, who had prepared the way for the arrival of its lord and who had been abandoned by the rest of the world when only Philippe remained faithful to it. By contrast, the iconography surrounding the fountains, including that of the urinating boy, is entirely devoid of such explanatory material, and this reflects the extent to which the fountains present as static tableaux, without the narrative associations of the religious imagery. In seeking to determine whether or not the urinating boy was regarded as a comic figure, therefore, we should not ignore the religious imagery associated with the event in which he appeared but neither should we over-emphasize its importance to the detriment of the secular images which appear to provide the most direct comparisons with the child.

The secular images of 1440 all occur, as has been noted, in the final section of the description of the festivities. They appear interspersed with New Testament scenes (or pseudo-New Testament scenes, since the image preceding the urinating child is that of Joachim and Anna) and all take the form of fountains. Whilst it is possible to interpret this within the traditional framework of Christian iconography which links the New Testament with resurgence and vitality, the absence of a gloss means that it is difficult to make an unequivocal evaluation of the significance of the images. They appear to draw upon the same lexicon of the exotic as the images at the Banquet of the Pheasant: as well as a urinating child and a lactating woman, we encounter a fool and a wild man (also urinating), a Saracen riding a camel and a battalion of mermen. All these characters occur in slightly varied poses at the Banquet of the Pheasant, with the exception of the mermen, who were nevertheless not infrequent participants in the festive occasions of the Burgundian court.¹⁴ Indeed, their very rate of recurrence in Burgundian court ceremony may be one of the reasons for the absence of gloss in the description of the entry of 1440: readers did not need these particular images explained because they were already familiar with them and with their meaning. However, this is not much help to us in determining whether or not they were

of Philippe's wife Isabella on behalf of Bruges in its time of need, supported by a Latin quotation reading *Da mihi populum meum, pro quo obsecro* (Esther 7. 3).

¹⁴ For example, at the wedding of Charles le Hardi and Margaret of York, twelve armed mermen and a pair of mermaids emerged from a massive whale, Olivier de La Marche, *Mémoires*, III (1885), 198–99.

regarded as comic images. Certainly there does seem to be a comic element to the secular iconography — for instance, the identification of one of the figures in Despars's account as a fool suggests some ludic associations. However, even the fool was a character with a complex relationship to play and seriousness in medieval culture and particularly in the Burgundian Netherlands, where the figure of the fool and his world upside down were frequently used in the artistic tradition to satirize the serious world. If the urinating child is meant as a comic character in the 1440 Bruges entry, therefore, it is possible that it inhabits the same semi-comic world as the fool. Moreover, the organizers of the festivity — and the authors who recorded the event — did not balk at seeing the urinating boy framed by two religious scenes of the utmost seriousness: the Immaculate Conception and the liberation of St Peter from prison. This suggests that whatever the comic content of the scene, it was not interpreted as mocking or undermining the religious and political import of the event.

The next references to the Manneken-Pis motif which present themselves for examination appear even less equivocally unhumorous in tone and are qualitatively different from the accounts of the festivities of either 1440 or 1454 by being archival references to identifiable and permanent fountains rather than fictionalized accounts of punctual events. However, there is a strong case for considering them in conjunction with the account of the Banquet of the Pheasant since they date from 1453 and 1455, the years either side of that in which the Lille event took place. This may be an indication that the motif was in vogue at the time at which it appeared on the ducal table at Lille and may demonstrate the associations it carried, not only for a medieval spectator, but specifically for a viewer of the first half of the 1450s.

The earlier of the two references is much less promising in terms of what it is able to say about the iconographical understanding applicable to the Manneken-Pis motif. It occurs in a document dividing Brussels into twenty-one districts (*wijken*) — ten within the inner city wall and eleven outside it — for the purposes of administration, policing, and protection against fire.¹⁵ This division appears to date back to 1421, but only the document dating from 1453 survives. In it, 'dMenneken pist' forms one of the landmarks defining the sixth and seventh districts outside the city wall. The mention is significant in that it

¹⁵ The document is reproduced in full, together with a discussion of its historical context, in René Laurent, 'L'Acte de 1453 concernant les limites des quartiers à Bruxelles', in *Hommage au Professeur Paul Bonenfant*, ed. by G. Despy, M.-A. Arnould, and M. Martens (Brussels: Universa, 1965), pp. 467–78.

confirms the assertions of those historians who claim that the Manneken-Pis of today is no more than a seventeenth-century replacement for an earlier statue and also in that it suggests that, even in 1453, Manneken-Pis was regarded as well known and permanent enough not only to have already acquired his name but to appear as a landmark defining official borders. However, the reference does little to tell us whether he was seen as a comic character at this time. The other landmarks listed are streets, buildings, gates, wells, and fountains, but there is little in the list to suggest that it has been composed for comic rather than topographical effect. Nor is there any explicit comment to indicate that names such as 'pepercorenborre' ('peppercorn well') or 'de coe' ('the cow', a reference, according to the editors, to an area at the crossroads of Pongelmerct and Hoen-dermerct, whose relationship to the beast which gave it its name is unclear) are intended humorously. Perhaps the presence of such landmarks indicates a recognition of the comic potential of such nomenclature: the author of the document wishes its readers to retain information about where the boundaries of the city districts begin and end and so seeks the most memorable landmarks to make the point. However, funny names and humorous forms are not the only features which make a landmark memorable, and it would be difficult to determine on the basis of the evidence in the 1453 document whether Manneken-Pis was regarded as a comic character.

The documents surrounding the 1455 order by the town of Geraardsbergen in the Flemish Ardennes of a statue depicting a urinating boy seem equally difficult to situate within a polemic that seeks to identify Manneken-Pis as a comic character. The fountain was initially ordered as a replacement for another fountain in the form of a lion, which had been destroyed in an attack by the troops of Jean de Croy. At first the intention seems to have been simply to replace the lion but, in July 1455, the civic authorities sent a representative to Jan Van der Scheiden, a Brussels master fountain maker, to order the figure of a small male child. This fountain, which was delivered in 1459, took its place on the market square alongside three other fountains. Two of these fountains seem to have taken the form of pillars with a spout (or, in the case of the larger of the fountains on the market square, two spouts) but the third was, at least until 1452, a lion.¹⁶ The Manneken-Pis motif in Geraardsbergen is thus closely correlated with

¹⁶ The third fountain, the 'cleen fonteyken vor scepenen huus', was severely damaged itself in the course of the same events which led to the ordering of the Geraardsbergen Manneken-Pis. However, even though records show that the fountain was extensively restored from 1462, including the use of elements which had previously been part of the fountain which became

the lion, both as a possible companion to that beast and as a substitute for it. This suggests an entirely uncomic understanding of the figure of the urinating child, since the lion is a state emblem throughout the Low Countries, appearing on the coats of arms of Brabant, Hainaut, and Flanders. If the urinating figure in Geraardsbergen was regarded as a suitable substitute for the originally intended lion, this could be because the child had become emblematic of the region in the same way that the lion was. In this connection, it should not be forgotten that the other fountain appearing on the ducal table at the Banquet of the Pheasant depicted St Andrew, the patron saint of Burgundy. Although the Burgundy of which Andrew was the patron was officially defined as including the Low Countries territories ruled by the Dukes of Burgundy, it was generally believed that Burgundian devotion to St Andrew had its origin in the French territories.¹⁷ The appearance of the saint together with the urinating child could therefore be interpreted as a complete iconographical scheme intended to represent the entirety of the diverse lands under Burgundian rule.

The association between the lion and the Geraardsbergen Manneken-Pis suggests the entirely serious reading of regional iconography. However, there are other, equally uncomical, connotations of the lion, which may also cast light upon the medieval view of the urinating boy. The lion was regarded as a brave and magnanimous beast, overcoming its enemies but sparing them.¹⁸ Consequently, it took on a religious association with Christ as Saviour. Whilst these may seem an unlikely set of attributes to associate with Manneken-Pis, there is much in the apocrypha surrounding the Brussels statue which suggests a comparison with both the religious and the secular iconography of the lion. On the one hand, the Brussels Manneken-Pis has for a long time been treated as if it were the icon of the infant Jesus which its form suggests. Like the statues of the baby Jesus which were popular souvenirs of the Low Countries in the fourteenth

the Manneken-Pis, they do not seem to indicate whether the lion motif was retained. M. Cock and R. Van Damme, *Het Manneken-Pis te Geraardsbergen: Een kritisch-historische studie over zijn ontstaan* (Geraardsbergen: Vlaamse Vereniging voor Familiekunde, afdeling Geraardsbergen, 1986), p. 18.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the significance of St Andrew in Burgundy, see Lafortune-Martel, *Fête noble en Bourgogne au XV^e siècle*, p. 113–14. Olivier de La Marche comments in his *Mémoires* (I (1883), 50) that 'l'ensaigne des Bourguignons est la croix saint Andrieu, et se aucune fois ilz ont porté aultre ensaigne, ce a esté quant la seignourie par quelquefois a esté ès mains des Roys de France'. This reflects the belief, which Lafortune-Martel demonstrates was not founded in fact, that St Andrew was a native Burgundian symbol.

¹⁸ Lafortune-Martel, *Fête noble en Bourgogne au XV^e siècle*, p. 141.

and fifteenth centuries, it is specially dressed on feast days, and numerous works of devotional literature have celebrated Manneken-Pis and its resemblance to the child Jesus.¹⁹ On the other hand, at least one explanation of how the statue in Brussels came to have such an unusual form sees the urinating child as a representation of Godefroid III, the infant Duke of Brabant who inspired his troops to victory whilst still in the cradle by a physical gesture of contempt. Whilst these associations with Manneken-Pis are attested only in periods much later than the fifteenth century, the contrast with the lion which is implied in the situation of the Geraardsbergen fountain suggests that it is plausible to speculate that they already existed at this time. If this were the case, the urinating child motif could be understood as a parallel to the figure of the lion which it replaced and may have appeared opposite. Like the lion, Manneken-Pis is a Christ, but, unlike the lion, not a Saviour but a vulnerable child earning veneration because of his bodily frailty rather than commanding it through physical force. Again, like the lion, Manneken-Pis is a victor but he is not magnanimous in his victory, pouring — quite literally — opprobrium on the heads of the departing foe. If the two figures did indeed appear side by side on the market square of fifteenth-century Geraardsbergen, therefore, it could be argued that they presented a series of interesting parallels on both the religious and secular levels, not quite complementary but also not entirely contradictory. In this connection, it is perhaps worth noting that in the bestiary the opposite of the lion is the snake, and the penis, which is often regarded as the attribute of the Manneken-Pis, is frequently assimilated to that creature.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the cultural practices surrounding Manneken-Pis which associate the statue with that of the infant Jesus, see Catherine Emerson, 'The Infant of Brussels: The Manneken-Pis as Christ Child', *Irish Journal of French Studies*, 3 (2003), 95–108. Amongst twentieth-century devotional works drawing on this association are Paul Cazin's 'Epître sur l'optimisme au Manneken-Pis de Bruxelles', in *Lubies* (Paris: Plon, 1927), pp. 1–21, and Jean Tigery, *Soliloque au Manneken Pis* (Brussels: Editions Vergucht, [1937?]). The first of these does not have an obviously devotional character, since it takes the form of a discursive anecdote set in the world of Catholic journal publishing but examining the nature of optimism. However, it is the first of a collection of short stories in which the values of innocence are particularly celebrated in Christian life and in this context it seems that Manneken-Pis, the addressee of the first tale, is to be regarded as an icon of this innocence. Jean Tigery's 'chanson à dire', on the other hand, has an explicitly devotional (but also comic) element. It is set at Christmas, and describes the various reactions of foreigners who encounter the statue. Whilst the conclusion is that Manneken-Pis is 'frais symbole de notre rire' (fol. 10^r), it is also seen as an embodiment of the Christ Child in its nudity which expresses 'De l'Enfant-Dieu l'humanité!' (fol. 6^v).

So far we have examined appearances of the urinating boy motif in the Low Countries and considered whether one non-comic interpretation of the figure may be seen as an expression of regional identity. However, in 1504, another urinating child was present at Anne de Bretagne's second entry into Paris, and this appearance presents further contextual information to refine our understanding of the way in which the image was considered. Paradoxically, however, although it has many features in common with the Burgundian instances of the 1440s and 1450s, this urinating fountain has traditionally been read as heralding a break with Burgundian influences on the political iconography of Paris in favour of what are considered Renaissance motifs. This reading arises from an argument suggested by Camille Enlart, amongst others, which sees both the Parisian statuette and the Brussels Manneken-Pis as inspired by an illustration in Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, published in 1499.²⁰ Whilst the Paris fountain may be inspired by one or another of the illustrations found in this edition, the Brussels Manneken-Pis clearly predates it, and it seems more likely that it was this pre-existing Burgundian tradition — and not a new Renaissance archetype — which influenced the designers of the 1504 spectacle.

The context of a Parisian entry is particularly instructive in seeking to understand the iconographical programme in which the urinating boy can be situated, since it presents not only an immediate framework of the event where the child appeared but also a longitudinal context of the position in the entry at which the child was placed, and the iconography associated with this situation. In the case of the Paris entry of 1504, the urinating child appeared at the Ponceau fountain, a spot traditionally associated with refreshment provided by the citizens of Paris for the entering sovereign and his or her retinue.²¹ However, by 1504, this drink

²⁰ Camille Enlart, *Manuel d'archéologie française*, vol. II: *Architecture civile et militaire* (Paris: Picard, 1904), p. 296 and n. 1. The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is available online at <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-books/HP/index.htm>>. The complex iconography of this work does not fall within the scope of this article but it should be noted that what Enlart refers to as 'ce motif' is the simple depiction of urinating boys rather than the depiction of fountains portraying this subject. Fountains are abundantly portrayed in the illustrations to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, notably a lactating fountain of the sort that often accompanies the Manneken-Pis on p. 90. However, the image to which Enlart appears to be referring is that on p. 175, depicting a large group of naked infants picking grapes and drinking wine. At least one of the children is urinating as a result.

²¹ An analysis of the iconography of the Parisian entries is to be found in Lawrence M. Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual and Art in the Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1986).

appears to have taken on more of a symbolic meaning. No longer was the entering party presented with individual cups of liquid at this point, but the fountain continued to represent the resources that Paris was able to offer its lord — usually in terms of loyalty, justice, and wisdom — and the channelling effect of good government provided in return. Whilst in 1504 the fountain took the form of a urinating infant, in other years it appeared in other guises that are familiar from other appearances of the Manneken-Pis motif. Hence, in 1484, Charles VIII was greeted by a fountain of a naked woman at this point, whose breasts delivered red wine and hypocras and who appears to have been intended to represent the virtue of charity. Similarly, in 1437, the fountain (this time depicting the royal symbols of a fleur-de-lis and two dolphins) appeared alongside a statue of John the Baptist, employed to the same ends as in the 1440 entry into Bruges to announce the coming of the city's secular lord. Whilst such explicitly religious iconography was unusual at the Ponceau fountain, there is no indication that this point in the Paris entry was ever intended to be understood humorously, and so there is no reason to suppose that the urinating child of 1504 was seen as a comic figure.

This reading is reinforced by the immediate context in which the motif appeared. Anne de Bretagne's second entry into Paris was marked by iconography emphasizing reciprocal relationships of exchange between the Queen and the city (Paris presented Anne with a golden ship, reminiscent of the coat of arms of that city, while Anne in exchange bestowed money and clothes on the musicians and heralds participating in the ceremony) and by images underlining the role of the three estates in the body politic. Throughout, the emphasis is on political harmony and, in this context, it is significant to note that the figure allegorized as *Justice* in the largest tableau was personified as a *parlementaire*. Were the urinating figure to be interpreted as comic, therefore, it would strike a discordant note in what is otherwise a very coherent political programme and it seems much more likely that the Manneken-Pis motif here is to be regarded as a representation of charity in the same way that the lactating woman placed on the same spot in 1484 was.

It thus seems that all the early appearances of the Manneken-Pis motif in the Low Countries and northern France in an official, royal, ducal, or civic context were — if not wholly serious in character — at least not unequivocally comic. However, there is one final instance of the motif which does appear to be largely ludic in intent. In January 1511 some 110 snow figures were built in Brussels in fifty or so tableaux. Amongst these, according to Jan Smeken, who described the event, was a naked child urinating rose water into the mouth of a man standing

beneath.²² The addition of the image of a drinker occasions a series of grotesque comic references to the swelling stomach of the man standing beneath and its eventual explosion, and the description of the tableau ends with a punning reference to the phallic potential of the organ from which the liquid issues. It is difficult to know what to make of this tableau, which appeared between a representation of a flatulent defecating cow and a pair of lovers described as as pure as brother and sister and as naked as Adam and Eve. It is clearly a comic scenario, as are the characters surrounding it, but is it a comic revisitation of a conventionally serious subject, a presentation of an image already understood as comic, or an entirely new creation which simply builds on elements of existing *Manneken-Pis* iconography? All three interpretations are plausible within the context of the 1511 snow pageant, which was indisputably comic but drew on a diverse iconographical programme including characters of religious and mythical significance such as St George, Mary Magdalene, and Venus, who are not traditionally seen as comic figures. Herman Pleij, who has produced a detailed analysis of the iconography of the pageant, appears to be uncertain as to the status of the urinating figure because of the presence of a second individual in the tableau and refers to the child as a 'quasi-*Manneken-Pis*'. Certainly, the fact that the 1511 festival presents a variation on the topos should not be overlooked in seeking to use Smeken's account as evidence of how the unaccompanied fountain was regarded. Whilst we may feel that the statue of a small child urinating is an inherently amusing object, it may be that for Smeken and his readers the comic potential of the image was only realized once the drinker was added to the picture.

What then can we say about the comic nature (or otherwise) of the urinating boy? In the absence of gloss for the image, we are forced to look at the context in which it appeared to determine whether it was seen as a humorous or mocking artefact. Such analysis can never be clear-cut — particularly not in questions of humour which are, if anything, more subjective than other aesthetic judgements; but it does not seem that the urinating child was presented to a late medieval and early modern audience in such a way as to accentuate its comic potential. Indeed,

²² Herman Pleij, *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511: Stadcultuur in de late middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff; Leuven: Kritak, 1988), p. 358: 'Bi den Spieghel sach men wondere: / Op een fonteyne stont een kint en piste, / Een man stont en gaepde daerondere, / Die op dit rooswater nau ghiste; / Omdat niet lopen en soude te quiste, / Ontfinck hij 't al in sinen mont; / Het kint niet eenen duym en miste / In 't pissen, also langhe al hi stont; / De man doer d'water was so ront, / Dat hi borstende daerhenen viel; / 't Pisserken moest oock vallen in den gront, / Metter fonteynen, hoe stijf hi hem hiel.'

if anything, the images surrounding the infant emphasized community, political, and even religious imagery in a way that was far from funny. It is possible that visitors to Hesdin who had been battered round the head, soaked, and covered in soot by Philippe le Bon's sadistic automata would not have appreciated the ducal sense of humour, but it is clear that Philippe was capable of mockery if the occasion arose. However, his launch of an expedition to the Holy Land in 1454 was not a time to be taking the piss, and even the presence of a urinating child on his table should not be regarded as evidence to the contrary.

PEUT-ON RIRE DE LA DESCRIPTION MÉDICALE D'UN SYNDROME? LES *QUINZE JOIES DE MARIAGE*

Jean Batany

Une 'Parodie' Didactique

Quize joies de Marie / *Quinze joies de mariage*, ce jeu d'éponymie et d'antiphrase sur un thème rituel largement connu a permis la rédaction (au début du XV^e siècle?) d'un opuscule formé de quinze chapitres en prose française, décrivant le sort d'un curieux animal, le 'mari', quand il cherche à 'entrer dans la nasse', et surtout quand il y est déjà, une formule-refrain à peu près semblable assurant, à la fin de chaque chapitre, que le héros restera dans ces tourments, qu'il 'prend pour des joies' et 'y finira misérablement ses jours'.¹

Le nom de l'auteur est donné par une énigme simplette selon l'usage de l'époque; j'ai plusieurs fois expliqué comment il faut l'interpréter sans complications inutiles: les lettres L, R, S doivent y figurer dans cet ordre, c'est reconnu depuis longtemps (*belle, mère et messe* 'sans teste'); *le monde*, apparu deux fois

¹ Références à l'édition de Jean Rychner, *Les XV joies de mariage* (Genève: Droz; Paris: Minard, 1963), établie à partir du MS de Rouen; recours partiels à l'édition de Joan Crow (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968) utilisant le MS Phillipps. On pourra se reporter à deux traductions récentes, en français moderne par Monique Santucci (Paris: Stock, 1986, avec une riche 'postface') et en italien par Claudio Galderisi, *Le quindici gioie del matrimonio* (Roma: Memini, 1996); je discuterai ici quelques détails de ces traductions.

Nazli Rizk, 'Didactisme et contestation dans les *Quinze joies de mariage*', *Le Moyen français*, 1 (1977, *Mélanges Franco Simone*), 33–89, noie des analyses intéressantes dans des formules de Julia Kristeva et d'autres abstracteurs modernes: il marginalise la forme médicale et la dimension comique du texte, pris trop au sérieux, surtout quand il force la palinodie finale en direction du nombrilisme mallarméen d'une littérature obsédée par sa propre littérarité, filon un peu trop exploité depuis quarante ans.

entre ces consonnes, représente évidemment la forme ronde de la lettre *o*, et *les deux piez qui le tout acquite* [sic] la forme de la lettre *n* terminant le mot.² Il faut donc lire: LORSON. Les banques de données prosopographiques en cours de constitution permettront peut-être de préciser l'identité de ce personnage, qui pourrait être un clerc et qui (d'après certains traits de vocabulaire) devait vivre dans l'Ouest de la France.

Le classement de cet ouvrage a fait divaguer bien des médiévistes. Tout d'abord parce qu'ils l'ont rangé dans la 'satire contre les femmes', en oubliant que les femmes (l'épouse et son groupe solidaire: mère, servantes, amies, 'commères' . . .) n'y sont presque jamais ridicules (sauf quand elles s'enivrent), mais odieuses ou perverses, ce qui est assez différent: c'est le mari qui est ridicule. Du reste, au Moyen Age, la tradition de la littérature sur les femmes et le mariage fait beaucoup moins souvent rire aux dépens des femmes que la satire VI de Juvénal;³ les peintures grotesques des fantaisies féminines dans *le Miroir de mariage* d'Eustache Deschamps n'ont que des équivalents sommaires dans les *Quinze joies*.⁴ De tels tableaux supposent peut-être, chez des auteurs dits 'antiféministes', une certaine empathie envers les femmes, et l'illusion de les 'chastier', de les corriger en leur montrant des défauts superficiels qu'elles peuvent dominer. Mais dans les *Quinze joies*, le souci de 'chastiment' moral semble concerner tout au plus le sexe masculin: les femmes sont un monde extérieur, n'attirant aucune empathie, quelque chose comme les fauves ou les rochers, un monde d'une cruauté mécanique sans faille, qu'on ne peut songer à corriger, et qu'il faut donc admettre tel qu'il est, ce qui peut suggérer qu'il faut en éviter le contact; l'ouvrage veut-il

² J'ai abordé l'ouvrage dans mon *Français médiéval*, 3^e éd. (Paris: Bordas, 1981), pp. 243–57; dans mes *Approches du Roman de la Rose* (Paris: Bordas, 1973), pp. 55–69; puis dans 'Une temporalité de dicto? les temps du récit typologique', *L'information grammaticale*, 38 (juin 1988), 48–50 (article confus, repris dans mes *Approches langagières de la société médiévale* (Caen: Paradigme, 1992), pp. 267–77, des bourdons différents gâtant ces deux impressions); et dans 'Un drôle de métier: le *status conjugatorum*', in *Femmes, mariages, lignages: Mélanges offerts à G. Duby* (Bruxelles: De Boeck, 1992), pp. 25–42 (p. 39).

³ Sur les sources du thème, il reste utile de se référer à Ph. Delhay, 'Le dossier anti-matrimonial de l'*Adversus Jovinianum* et son influence sur quelques écrits latins du XII^e siècle', *Mediaeval Studies*, 13 (1951), 65–86. On trouvera diverses références dans les nombreux ouvrages récents sur le thème de 'la femme au Moyen Age'!

⁴ Voir entre autres Monique Dufournaud-Engel, 'Le *Miroir de mariage* d'Eustache Deschamps, sources et tradition', in *Seconda miscellanea di studi sul quattrocento francese*, éd. par F. Simone et autres (Chambéry: Centre d'Études Franco-Italien, 1981), pp. 145–57. Notre auteur n'abuse pas, comme Deschamps, des énumérations rabelaisiennes.

persuader les jeunes gens qu'un tel contact aboutit à un processus catastrophique irréversible? Il faudra y revenir . . .

L'autre erreur de classement, plus absurde mais aujourd'hui dépassée, est d'avoir utilisé notre opuscule pour étoffer le chapitre sur les 'nouvelles françaises du XV^e siècle' (chapitre souvent hétéroclite et boiteux, parce que fondé sur la notion d'un 'genre' qui n'est pas encore bien établi en France avant 1500). Une *nouvelle* présente, au passé simple en général, une aventure survenue à un personnage (ou à un groupe) imaginaire ou réel, mais individuel et identifié. Les *Quinze joies* décrivent, au présent et au futur 'scientifiques',⁵ un phénomène défini comme général, et dont l'évolution est présentée sur un personnage typologique sans identité individuelle, un modèle susceptible de très nombreuses variantes correspondant aux statuts sociaux possibles et aux circonstances ('à l'aventure', 'aucunefois', 'selon l'état dont il est', 'puet estre' . . .), variantes possibles rappelées à chaque instant. Chaque chapitre représente donc une fiche d'analyse établie à partir de plusieurs cas voisins qu'on a observés et qu'on élargit à un modèle général, constituant lui-même une variante par rapport à l'ensemble de l'ouvrage. On n'est donc pas du tout dans le domaine de la narration historique ou fictionnelle, mais dans celui de la description morale ou scientifique, cherchant un effet critique, mais évitant la brutalité de l'invective et la lourdeur lassante de l'exhortation par l'emploi d'un discours faussement objectif bien que caricatural, à classer, dans nos catégories actuelles, sous un terme comme 'parodie', 'satire' ou 'ironie'.⁶

⁵ Voir quatre de mes articles rassemblés dans mon volume, *Approches langagières*: 'Normes, types et individus: la présentation des modèles sociaux au XII^e siècle', pp. 208–28 (surtout p. 217); 'Temporalité et conduites typiques: le futur "généralisant" dans quelques "revues d'états" (XII^e–XIII^e siècle)', pp. 239–56; 'Futur et typologie sociale dans les *Mélancholies* de Jean Dupin (1340)', pp. 257–65; et 'Une temporalité *de dicto*?' (voir note 2). Il est curieux que les linguistes travaillant sur le système des temps verbaux aient attaché si peu d'importance aux problèmes du récit typologique. Il serait pourtant simple de partir de là pour dire que le présent situe (plus ou moins fictivement) le procès au moment de son énonciation. Voir plus loin, note 21.

⁶ Sur ces notions, entre mille études, signalons les travaux récents de nos collègues de Milan et de Gênes (et les recherches plus anciennes qu'ils citent en italien): *Dialettiche della parodia*, recueil éd. par M. Bonafin (= *L'immagine riflessa*, quaderni; Alessandria: éd. Dell'Orso, 1997); Massimo Bonafin, *Contesti della parodia; semiotica, antropologia, cultura medievale* (Torino: UTET, 2001). Mon compte rendu détaillé de ce dernier ouvrage doit paraître dans la *Revue Critique de Philologie Romane*.

Le terme de *parodie* semble convenir ici à un classement assez adéquat, à condition de bien voir sa portée.⁷ Il ne s'agit évidemment pas d'une parodie cherchant à subvertir ou à confirmer la valeur d'un texte 'matriciel' précis,⁸ mais seulement du procédé plus matériel réemployant les cadres textuels d'un type de discours connu, en faisant comprendre discrètement une analogie profonde entre les faits décrits et ceux qu'évoquait le texte matriciel, qui n'est donc pas remis en cause, mais sert au contraire à remettre en cause une expérience courante (ou un texte moderne).

Ici, le type de discours parodié ne saurait être la méditation sur les *Quinzes joies de Marie*, que le titre n'évoque que pour un jeu de mots. On pourrait penser aux récits typologiques utilisés parfois dans les sermons ou les traités moraux, quand le prédicateur évoque en détail la vie lamentable de l'avare, du luxurieux ou du paresseux, ou, au contraire, la vie exaltante du moine fidèle à sa vocation. Mais, en fait, ce procédé est rarement employé de façon systématique par les sermonnaires avant le XV^e siècle; quand ils l'utilisent, c'est pour décrire une conduite nettement vantée ou condamnée, avec des tournures exhortatives ou dévalorisantes qui l'emportent sur la description objective. Dans les textes de critique sociale, plus fréquents à l'époque considérée, comme ceux de Gerson cités par Rychner, les personnages modestes ne sont pas visés, mais cités comme victimes des fonctionnaires royaux ou des 'gens d'armes' qu'il s'agit de condamner.⁹ Dans nos *Quinzes joies*, le mari n'est pas présenté comme la victime d'odieux abus sociaux dont il ressent l'horreur. Il n'est pas non plus culpabilisé, ni offert en modèle, mais présenté comme un phénomène dont les illusions de bonheur ne sont pas liées, comme chez les martyrs, à l'espoir d'une autre vie, ni, comme chez les pécheurs, à la jouissance immédiate des plaisirs grossiers et de la méchanceté, mais seulement à une perception déviante contredisant le jugement objectif de l'observateur.

On pourrait penser à la parodie de textes juridiques, qui montreraient comment un sujet qui s'est engagé dans un contrat ou dans une fonction peut en

⁷ Sur certains abus dans l'emploi de la notion de 'parodie' pour la littérature médiévale, voir par ex. mon compte rendu du livre de Kathryn Gravdal, *Vilain and Courtois: Transgressive Parody in French Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) dans *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 36 (1993), 402-04.

⁸ Pour cette distinction élémentaire mais parfois oubliée, voir par ex. Linda Hutcheon, 'L'estensione pragmatica della parodia', dans *Dialettiche della parodia*, éd. par Bonafin, pp. 75-96 (pp. 84-85).

⁹ *Les XV joies*, éd. par Rychner, pp. xxx-xxxii.

devenir ensuite prisonnier. La parenté avec de tels textes a pu orienter certains critiques vers une interprétation erronée du sens moral des *Quinze joies*, qui ne viseraient pas la personne du mari, mais une institution, celle du mariage indissoluble, tel qu'il existe théoriquement au Moyen Âge: il n'y aurait plus de problème, nous dit-on, si le divorce existait.¹⁰ Quelques expressions, à la fin de la X^e Joie, peuvent donner cette impression.¹¹ Mais en fait, le divorce a existé tout au long du Moyen Âge, sous la forme de l'annulation du mariage, qui permettait de nouvelles noces, grâce à des prétextes d'empêchement dirimant faciles à trouver dans les classes supérieures.¹² Mais surtout, regardons notre texte: les époux séparés 'se cuident estre mis hors de la nasse, et cuident estre eschappez, mais ils sont pis que davant';¹³ et la XIV^e Joie précise explicitement le cas du veuf qui n'a rien de plus pressé que de se remarier. Plusieurs formules terminales disent que le mari 'demourra en la nasse ou il est mis en grans tourmens, qu'il a prins et prent pour joies, car s'il n'y estoit, il ne fineroit jamés jucques ad ce qu'il y fust, et ne vouldroit pas estre aultrement'.¹⁴

Si le divorce existait (comme le réclameront un siècle plus tard certains 'évangélistes'), notre auteur nous représenterait ironiquement un mari qui a réussi à 'sortir de la nasse', mais qui cherche aussitôt à entrer dans une autre, quitte à devoir en sortir encore peu après, comme le fera Henri VIII d'Angleterre, ou comme ces hommes que nous voyons aujourd'hui divorcer deux ou trois fois de suite. Peut-être aussi nous montrerait-il la mère de la jeune fille l'exhortant à se marier en lui disant 'marie-toi donc, dans dix ans tu divorceras et tu pourras vivre de la pension alimentaire' (schéma assez usuel de nos jours). En tous cas, le système du 'mariage indissoluble' ne paraît absolument pas être mis en cause ici comme raison des 'tourments' du mari; à moins de supposer que celui-ci pourrait bénéficier, comme dans la nouvelle législation française du XXI^e siècle, du droit d'imposer le divorce à sa femme deux ans après l'avoir abandonnée,

¹⁰ Par ex. Monique Santucci, 'Pour une interprétation nouvelle des *Quinze Joies de mariage*', in *Le Récit bref au Moyen Âge*, éd. par D. Buschinger (Amiens: Université de Picardie, 1980), pp. 153–73. Mais Monique Santucci, tenant compte de mes remarques, a assoupli et approfondi son analyse dans la 'Postface' de sa traduction.

¹¹ *Les XV joies*, éd. par Rychner, X, 104: 'Ilz ne se pouent plus marier ne l'un ne l'autre' après leur séparation légale.

¹² Voir entre autres Georges Duby, *Le Chevalier, la femme et le prêtre: le mariage dans la France féodale* (Paris: Hachette, 1981).

¹³ *Les XV joies*, éd. par Rychner, X, 100–102

¹⁴ Ibid., V, 518–22; cp. II, 98–99; IX, 163–64; XII, 4–8.

c'est-à-dire de la répudier; je ne pense pas que notre auteur (ni sa traductrice) ait envisagé ce rétablissement d'une coutume barbare comme solution morale sauvant le mari . . . aux dépens de la femme.

Plutôt qu'à une parodie des formes juridiques, qui ne viserait pas le coeur du personnage central, on pourrait penser à une parodie des *Bestiaires*, qui tracent un portrait typique de la conduite propre à un animal,¹⁵ mais sous une forme plus brève que nos *Quinzes joies*, où le 'mari' semble un gibier poursuivi assez longtemps par quelque chasseur qui en connaît les habitudes (pour un 'safari-photos', dirions-nous aujourd'hui!); il faudrait pourtant penser seulement aux *Bestiaires* du XIII^e siècle, les plus anciens bardant leur analyse de symboles théologiques.

Le style objectif des traités médicaux semble donc offrir un modèle plus proche de notre texte. Philippe de Mézières, dans son *Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage*, sans doute un peu antérieur,¹⁶ adoptait aussi un point de vue médical, mais de façon sérieuse et explicite, sans esprit parodique, et en insistant sur le cas de la femme: il expliquait les mariages malheureux par les 'sept types de fièvre' qui affectent les épouses selon les excès ou les déviations du 'tempérament' entre leurs diverses 'humeurs'. Dans les *Quinze joies*, les femmes ne sont aucunement présentées comme des malades, mais plutôt comme des modèles de santé florissante. La déclaration de la conclusion, selon laquelle 'tout est a leur louange et honneur' (ll. 12–13) se place du point de vue de la santé et de la réussite humaine, sans référence à la morale religieuse; avant de filer vers la palinodie dans les dernières lignes, l'auteur restera fidèle au thème de la supériorité féminine, qui éclaire tout son ouvrage, en présentant les hommes 'embridez et abestis' (ll. 28–30) comme ceux qui ont 'toujours la plus mauvaise part, ce qui est un honneur pour les femmes' (bonne traduction de Monique Santucci pour les ll. 47–48). Tout l'ouvrage montre des femmes intelligentes, rusées et efficaces dans leurs entreprises; le regard médical critique de l'auteur porte sur les hommes, sans le diagnostic explicite qu'il laisse au lecteur le soin de préciser. C'est l'attitude

¹⁵ Je ne peux donner ici toute une bibliographie sur les *Bestiaires*. Rappelons, pour une première approche, le petit recueil de traductions: *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, mis en français moderne par Gabriel Bianciotto (Paris: Stock, 1980).

¹⁶ Voir Elie Golenistcheff-Koutousoff, *Etude sur le livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage de Philippe de Mézières* (Belgrade: Svetlost, 1937); et Marie-Geneviève Grossel, 'Sainte paysanne et épouse fidèle, l'image de Griseldis à l'époque des Miroirs de Mariage', dans *Autour d'Eustache Deschamps*, éd. par Danièle Buschinger (Amiens: Centre d'Etudes Médiévales, 1995), pp. 103–14.

d'un observateur au regard 'clinique', analysant de près les symptômes. Il décrit donc l'évolution d'une pathologie observable dans divers cas analogues ou dans diverses étapes successives du mal, et telle qu'on peut en prévoir le développement ultérieur. C'est, en somme, à une perspective de ce genre qu'on pense quand on entend une telle succession de présents et de futurs de généralité.

De quelle pathologie s'agit-il? Comme pour toutes les affections psychophysiologiques, le problème le plus grave nous paraît la distinction entre un mal temporaire et guérissable et un handicap constitutionnel ou une invalidité acquise; bien entendu, notre texte du XV^e siècle ne résout pas ce problème. Mais il semblerait, pour notre mentalité moderne, que, dans les deux cas, il soit choquant de tourner le patient en ridicule: on ne se moque pas d'un malade, ni d'un handicapé. Cependant, on a dit depuis longtemps que les maniaques joués par Molière souffrent de pathologies mentales, et ils continuent pourtant à faire rire.¹⁷ Quelques sondages dans nos *Quinze joies* pourront nous aider à faire avancer ce problème.

Rhétorique et Carnaval

Le procédé de style de base est donc celui du récit typologique, déjà représenté dans la Bible,¹⁸ dans le *De duodecim abusivis saeculi*, dans beaucoup de passages des sermons patristiques, et, nous l'avons vu, dans les Bestiaires. Dans la plupart de ces modèles, le tableau d'une conduite typique est orienté dans le sens d'un éloge ou d'une critique morale; cependant, Rychner rapproche à juste titre de textes plus objectifs ou proposant une norme artificielle, ceux des *Manières de langage*, et on pourrait penser aussi aux indications de mise en scène ('didascalies') des pièces de théâtre en latin ou en langues vulgaires.¹⁹

Le récit fondé sur le présent 'intemporel' tend à créer chez le lecteur la bonne conscience sécurisante d'une expérience qu'il a pu connaître et qu'il peut renouveler, au lieu de lui imposer, comme le passé de la fable ou du roman, le récit

¹⁷ Molière jouait lui-même les cas pathologiques les plus voyants, comme Harpagon ou Argan. Mais la plupart de ses personnages originaux devaient aussi passer aux yeux du public pour des psychopathes ridicules: il voulait sans doute faire rire de la candeur naïve de Philinte, de la balourdise gourmande de Tartuffe, ou de la prétention intellectuelle et élitiste de don Juan, dont les mises en scène modernes effacent fâcheusement le grotesque.

¹⁸ En particulier dans l'*Ecclésiastique* ou *Sagesse de Ben Sirach*, aux chapitres 10, 14, 20, 21, 31, 38-39.

¹⁹ Voir *Les XV joies*, éd. par Rychner, pp. xxvii-xxx.

d'une aventure dont il doit croire le témoin parce qu'il n'a pas pu la voir. Ce lecteur coopère donc avec l'auteur au laboratoire, en voyant l'animal observé dans une position où celui-ci se fige dans un état limitant ses possibilités normatives de dépassement ou de détérioration, possibilités essentielles à la vie.²⁰ Cette limitation correspond à la valeur du présent comme temps de l'énonciation, transcendant l'enracinement temporel de toute l'histoire et affirmant un destin éternellement contemporain de la voix qui parle; une voix vive, mais qui, lorsque la perspective du temps intemporel écrase toute réaction contradictoire, anéantit le devenir vivant du spécimen zoologique observé.²¹ L'observation généralisante met celui-ci dans un état quasi-pathologique où peut disparaître la liberté qui définit paradoxalement sa norme comme recherche d'autres normes adaptées. Le présent du laboratoire établit dans la vie du sujet une homéostasie artificielle et contraignante, comme les didascalies ou les *scenarii* limitent les possibilités de choix des acteurs.

Dans nos *Quinze joies*, cependant, on pourrait croire ces possibilités de choix multipliées par les formules *a l'aventure, puet estre, aucuneffois* [. . .] qui envisagent des variantes abondantes dans les conduites analysées. Mais il ne s'agit pas alors d'une liberté qui permettrait l'accès à de nouvelles normes: il s'agit au contraire de montrer que la diversité des situations n'ouvre au sujet aucune chance d'échapper à son sort, pris qu'il est en toutes positions par un 'arc-qui-ne-faut' analogue à celui de Tristan, sans échappatoire possible.²² Notre auteur évite l'emploi rhétorique du dilemme proprement dit, trop proche du tragique; il veut donner l'impression que son personnage est trop maladroit pour trouver la sortie du labyrinthe. Le lecteur peut donc rire, comme l'enfant devant la cage où s'agite son hamster.

²⁰ Je m'inspirerai beaucoup ici du livre de Georges Canguilhem, *Le Normal et le pathologique*, nouvelle édition complétée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966). Cet ouvrage met en vedette le dynamisme du vivant, être ouvert à la recherche de nouvelles normes, et non figé dans une structure 'normale'. Canguilhem n'insiste peut-être pas assez sur l'élan spontané et gratuit (ludique) d'où part cette recherche, ni sur la situation pathologique dans laquelle l'examen de laboratoire enferme l'animal, à qui est alors interdit le déploiement fructueux (bien que contingent) de sa liberté 'normative'.

²¹ Voir Marie-Louise Ollier, 'Le présent du récit: intemporalité et roman en vers', dans *Grammaires du texte médiéval = Langue française*, 40 (décembre 1978), 99–112 (p. 105). Voir supra, note 5.

²² Voir mon étude: 'Une troisième dimension dans le récit prospectif: la double protase chez Bérout', dans *Le roman de Tristan, le maschere di Bérout*, éd. par Rosanna Brusegan, *Medioevo Romanzo*, 25 (2001), 191–210 (pp. 195–99).

Les nombreux futurs complétant les présents prévoient la suite de l'expérience, telle qu'elle pourrait être mise en spectacle pour le lecteur; c'est proprement un pronostic, supposant la connaissance déjà établie du schéma d'évolution de la maladie.²³ Ces futurs ont donc, plus encore que les présents, une valeur normative, comme je l'ai montré sur des textes de moralistes. Mais ils contribuent à la distanciation du lecteur: l'évolution de la maladie y paraît une petite mécanique très extérieure à la vie du spectateur: 'ça se passera pour lui, c'est automatique, mais pas pour moi'. Dans la *Première joie*, ll. 149–61, par exemple, une suite de futurs écartent assez le lecteur d'une empathie possible pour qu'il puisse accepter le retour du présent dans le dialogue qui suit: il verra alors les choses de loin, comme l'effet d'une relation qui s'est enfoncée dans l'extériorité d'un spectacle où les gestes sont dictés.

Il serait trop long de reprendre l'étude de tous les procédés de style des *Quinze joies* dans notre perspective. Soulignons cependant les emplois de l'ironie, qui anéantit le sens contextuel d'un mot ou d'un propos prêté à un autre énonciateur, en incitant l'auditeur à le transposer dans une vérité intemporelle où il devient absurde. Il faudrait conserver ces effets de sous-entendu évident sans les expliciter, dans une traduction en français moderne: des mots comme *raison*, *prodome*, *mesnage* ont une valeur laudative dans la vérité intemporelle, c'est leur emploi à contresens par un personnage ou par un narrateur naïf qui souligne le ridicule d'une situation; il est donc fâcheux de traduire *raison* par 'amour' (II, 63; cp. plus loin 'qu'elle entende raison', même valeur ironique), *prodome* par 'respectable benêt' (passim, traduction malheureuse d'une étiquette élogieuse dont il faut sourire!) et *mesnage* par 'remue-ménage', terme péjoratif fâcheux quand l'auteur feint d'admirer ce que le personnage a gagné dans la gestion de son économie domestique (X, III et XII, 80).

Notons ici que le plus ancien emploi en français du mot *ironie* sert à présenter en antiphrase des métaphores animales évoquant des types sociaux critiqués: 'demandez donc de la loyauté à un loup, fiez-vous à un cheval rétif!'²⁴ L'antiphrase ironique, comme l'image zoologique, évoque facilement le thème carnavalesque d'une double personnalité qu'on reconnaît d'un seul regard attentif. Le 'mari' des *Quinze joies*, 'transfiguré en une beste sans enchantement' (VII, 259)

²³ Sur cet emploi du futur, voir en particulier mes études: 'Temporalités et conduites typiques'; et 'Futur et typologie sociale dans les *Mélancolies* de Jean Dupin'.

²⁴ Voir F. J. Tanquerey, *Deux poèmes moraux anglo-français: le 'Roman des Romans' et le Sermon en vers* (Paris: Champion, 1922), p. 64 (*Le Roman des Romans*, ll. 592–96: 'Par yronie le vos voil aconter [. . .]').

est assimilé à toutes sortes d'animaux, le vieil âne, le cheval recru, le coq, le vieil ours emmuselé . . . et bien entendu, le poisson, dans l'image de base de la nasse, étendue au passage à la femme (XIV, 65–70) qui est aussi annexée aux animaux par l'image du chat et du chien (XIV, 102–03). On descend au niveau végétal quand la dame 'plante' son mari pour le laisser 'reverdir' (X, 60; image à conserver en traduisant!). Le camp féminin tombe encore plus bas par la comparaison avec la 'botte', le tonneau,²⁵ mais le mari n'est pas sauvé par là de la dépréciation puisqu'il ne fait que transférer le vin d'un tonneau (réel) à un autre (le ventre des commères): il n'est plus virtuellement qu'une pompe . . .

Les détails qui sont cités comme cadres réels de l'action et non comme des métaphores peuvent jouer eux-mêmes le rôle d'évocation morale. En mourant dans le voyage de retour du pèlerinage, le cheval participe à l'épuisement de son maître (VIII, 135–40), mais celui-ci le remplace, dans un dépassement de l'animalité qui le rend à la fois admirable et ridicule. Le rapport métonymique ne nous écarte donc pas d'une procédure de rédaction constamment rhétorique, mais il souligne sa portée carnalesque.²⁶ Déguisés ou non par le style de l'auteur, les personnages sont ceux d'un défilé grotesque, mais pas trop concret, car il faut toujours que le défilé évoque, dans des procédés comme l'ironie, des déguisements que l'oeil ne voit pas avec précision mais que la perception imagine sur le modèle de ceux du carnaval. Et ce défilé n'est pas dans un désordre hétéroclite: il est centré sur un personnage isolé dans sa cage, et qui peut réapparaître dans plusieurs chars successifs (les 'Joies') sous des formes un peu différentes mais toujours comparables.

Le Reclus dans sa Cage

Notre auteur 'joue le personnage' (suivant une expression qu'il aime) d'un médecin, et nous propose un fichier sur des cas comparables entre eux, des cas d'une sorte d'algomanie euphorique, proche du doulopsychisme (mentalité d'esclave,

²⁵ *Les XV joies*, éd. par J. Rychner, III, 31. Claudio Galderisi a raison, contre l'idée bizarre de Rychner, d'admettre que *botte* signifie ici 'tonneau', sens habituel du mot en latin médiéval et dans diverses langues européennes. Le sens vestimentaire vient probablement d'un emploi plaisant. On a pu cependant rattacher tous les emplois du mot à l'idée d'ensemble d'éléments groupés en rond'. Voir par ex. l'inventaire des emplois par Michel Barbier, 'Dictionnaire de la vieille France: *botte*', *Le Journal de la vieille France*, 58 (2004), 114–17.

²⁶ Sur cette tendance de la littérature aux XIII^e–XIV^e siècles, voir mes *Scènes et coulisses du Roman de Renart* (Paris: SEDES, 1989) et les ouvrages auxquels je renvoie.

cf. 'Grant servage', V, 26) repéré par les Anciens, et rappelant sans doute au psychiatre moderne la paranoïa obsessionnelle, l'hébéphrénie de soumission ou la catatonie paralysante, mais ne tombant jamais dans un délire caractérisé, parce que la conduite est liée à une contrainte institutionnelle définie qui entrave les éclats d'un conflit manifeste.

A première vue, le symptôme fondamental des personnages visés (leur pluralité est niée du bout des lèvres, au début de certains chapitres, pour relier artificiellement les fiches, mais elle est évidente), c'est le repli sur soi, la solitude morale irrémédiable, qui n'est pas perçue par le 'mari' typique comme un isolement dans un désert, mais plutôt comme la position d'un 'reclus' (type social important à l'époque), enfermé dans une sorte de cage où le public regarde comme dans une ménagerie, les enfants se moquant de lui et les adultes soupçonnant chez lui quelque vieux 'péché' (IX, 72; les recluses étaient généralement des prostituées à la retraite . . .). Il ne fréquente d'autres hommes que par nécessité professionnelle (ceux qu'il amène chez lui dans la 'VI^e Joie'); son 'ami' de la VII^e Joie est introduit de façon inattendue, on ignore leurs rapports antérieurs; il est traité bientôt comme 'l'ami qui vous veut du bien' des dénonciations anonymes, et l'amitié se change donc en haine: notre 'mari' est incapable d'une relation de confiance durable . . .

Le personnage parle peu: ses silences sont appuyés, ses répliques généralement brèves, même quand une discussion semblerait devoir s'engager (par ex. II, 23). Il ne fait des discours que sur son lit de vieux malade (IX, 80–118), selon le stéréotype du mourant fixant ses volontés testamentaires, un discours à sa femme et un à son fils, mais on lui coupe la parole et il n'insiste pas. S'il parle à ses domestiques (III, 136–39), c'est une réaction purement verbale au moment où il devrait organiser leur activité au lieu de la critiquer.

Dans sa pensée, les actions de sa femme sont ramenées, aux moments les plus inattendus, à ses propres préoccupations pratiques, dans lesquelles il est enfermé: en XII, 70, quand l'amant est venu en pleine nuit et que la femme explique les aboiements du chien par un passage de rats, le mari, même s'il avait vu clairement sa femme rejoindre quelqu'un, 'penseroit qu'elle feïst aultre chose pour son prouffit', c'est-à-dire qu'il croirait qu'elle s'occupe d'un problème urgent du 'mesnage' (*feïst aultre chose* ne peut pas être rattaché au prétexte invoqué des rats, comme le croient les traducteurs récents). De même, un peu plus haut (XII, 30–31), si elle se plaint 'il ne sonne mot, car, quelque tort que elle ait, il lui semble que elle a droit et qu'elle est sage' (c'est évidemment le mari qui s' imagine que sa femme a raison: étrange erreur d'une traduction). Il est incapable de programmer l'avenir: les nombreux futurs du texte représentent tous les pronostics

du médecin, le mari n'emploie ce temps que pour des malédictions vagues et inopérantes (par ex. IX, 109–11). Il ne parle pas des autres, mais les autres parlent de lui: on évoque au style indirect les propos narquois des hommes (VI, 171–77) et ceux des femmes sont cités explicitement et largement (III, 37–95; V, *passim*; le ridicule de la victime est souligné par son bourreau, comme souvent dans le *Roman de Renart*); l'absence du personnage permet alors une description de son attitude sous une forme caricaturale, mais sécurisante et déculpabilisante pour l'entourage — et, au-delà, pour le lecteur! — la cause du mal étant rejetée sur lui. Quand on nous dit qu'il 'tense et tempeste' (par ex. V, 10), on cite peu ses paroles et il semble plutôt s'agiter que raisonner.

Et pourtant on lui prête de la 'raison': un passage de la VII^e Joie, soulignant la généralisation par un pluriel, en assurant que les maris ne trompent pas leurs femmes parce qu'ils les croient toujours les meilleures possibles, précise curieusement que ceux qui, par hasard, trompent leur femme sont des 'ribaux desesperez et sans raison, qui n'ont point d'entendement': l'illusion bénéfique est donc liée à une certaine sagesse raisonnable.

On nous dit bien que le mari est 'sensé', et qu'il comprend bien l'essentiel de la situation et des manœuvres du camp féminin, on le voit tout au long des Joies III, IX et XV. Il 'semble un foul combien qu'il ne l'est pas' (III, 265), car il a bien dit peu avant à la dame 'Vous avez tort' (185), 'vous estes bien esmeüe et sans cause' (202), et cependant le voilà qui entre ensuite dans le jeu en recevant les commères 'sans chapperons, tant est jolis' (excité comme un jeune homme). Il tente alors de jouer son 'personnage', terme qu'on évite pourtant pour lui, car ce n'est qu'une tentative occasionnelle; ordinairement, on a l'impression qu'il est hors du jeu (comme dans le ballet féminin bien réglé de la 'XV^e Joie'); il y est pris, pourtant, mais classé perdant d'office, 'par le droit du jeu' (VI, 234; XV, 348); 'c'est la nature du jeu qui le vieult' (Concl., 36). Il ne sait pas (comme le fait Tristan chez Bérout) prendre ses distances vis-à-vis du jeu qui l'élimine, et se venger des joueurs.²⁷ On est bien ici dans la tradition des fabliaux, où, 'pour chaque gagnant il y aura fatalement un perdant, à qui aucun prix ne sera décerné': les *Quinze joies* sont plus proches des fabliaux que les autres pamphlets anti-matrimoniaux: la narration y escamote mieux le jugement moral.²⁸

²⁷ Voir mon étude: 'Le *Tristan* de Bérout, une tragédie ludique', dans *L'Hostellerie de Pensée: Mélanges Daniel Poirion* (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne, 1995), pp. 27–39 (p. 35).

²⁸ Brian Levy, "'Rien ne va plus?' Jeux et joueurs dans les fabliaux", *Reinardus*, 3 (1990), 81–92 (p. 81). Il peut cependant arriver (comme dans certains fabliaux) qu'il n'y ait aucun gagnant. Dans l'épisode (XIII, 44–89) où l'on reconnaît le thème populaire de l'*Enoch Arden*

Faut-il croire que ce mari atone est ‘envoûté’? La X^e Joie le suggère.²⁹ Mais l’effet de l’opération magique est réduit à une impuissance sexuelle (le ‘nouement d’aiguillette’ bien connu). En fait, la paralysie morale entre en jeu dès l’entrée dans le statut marital, elle peut même l’anticiper. Avec la XI^e Joie, l’auteur (revenant en arrière, si on prend l’ouvrage pour un roman!) se décide à raconter un exemple de l’entrée ‘dans la nasse’. Or, dans ce chapitre, le personnage qui va être le mari n’a rien de franchement ridicule au départ, bien qu’un peu ‘béjaune’. Et pourtant il est ‘précocufié’: l’état de cocu est tellement inhérent au mariage qu’il peut être acquis d’avance. Au fond, c’est le mariage par lui-même qui est un ‘maléfice’, parce qu’il crée une situation de ‘double contrainte’, comme dit la psychologie moderne: ‘j’ay tant a faire que je ne scey auquel obeir’ (VIII, 72–73).³⁰

Il faudrait sans doute préciser plus nettement que cela ne peut être fait ici les distinctions entre le *dilemme* classique, la *double contrainte*, et les phénomènes de compulsion (‘c’est interdit, donc c’est obligatoire’) ou d’inhibition (‘c’est obligatoire, donc c’est interdit’), tout cela, en fait, relevant d’une ambivalence fondamentale de l’activité biologique. Les élèves de Bateson reconnaissant (‘en passant!’) que le ‘paradoxe pragmatique’ et ses effets peuvent affecter même des organismes au système nerveux rudimentaire: ‘on peut se demander si n’interviendrait pas là une loi fondamentale de l’existence’.³¹ La vie est dans doute une adaptation permanente à des doubles contraintes; leurs effets particulièrement pervers chez l’homme viennent surtout des obsessions, conscientes ou non, qui leur offrent des réponses simplistes et inefficaces dans la pensée individuelle.

Le mari des *Quinze joies* est obsédé par son *mesnage* et sa *chevance*, les deux termes reviennent de manière lancinante comme le pivot de son tourbillon de panique: sa conscience se fixe sur le principe budgétaire du jeu, dont les règles

de Tennyson et de la vieille chanson ‘Pauvre marin revient de guerre [. . .]’, les deux maris superposés sont vaincus et ridicules, chacun étant publiquement cocufié par l’autre (et la femme s’effondre). Leur situation n’est pas une simple invention du folklore: de pareils cas s’étaient produits souvent pendant les Croisades et étaient discutés par les canonistes (cf. Duby, *Le Chevalier, la femme et le prêtre*, p. 178).

²⁹ L’auteur ne présente pas l’envoûtement comme une illusion, comme le laisse penser la traduction moderne: ‘La femme s’imagine [. . .]’. Il sait que ses lecteurs croient à ces phénomènes de sorcellerie.

³⁰ Voir par ex. Paul Watzlawick, Janet Helmick Beavin et Don D. Jackson, *Une logique de la communication*, trad. par Janine Morche (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

³¹ Ibid., p. 218.

d'application contredisent la définition. Son ridicule vient d'une hyperconscience et non d'une inconscience, et l'on pourrait s'attendre à voir ce ridicule tourner à la tragédie, dans ce désespoir suicidaire qui est discrètement envisagé à la fin de la IX^e Joie: 'est de merveille qu'il ne entre en desesperance, et si feroit il si n'estoit qu'il est sages homs'.

'Sages homs': c'est donc, en fin de compte, cette 'sagesse' qui lui fait 'reputer pour joies' les malheurs qui lui arrivent. Il est trop 'sage' pour se réputer 'malade', et l'on peut soupçonner le médecin qui décrit le syndrome d'avoir rédigé ses fiches sans un entretien direct avec le sujet, car le type de patient qu'il présente ne va pas quémander une thérapeutique. Les fiches de notre observateur viennent donc essentiellement d'une analyse des rapports du patient avec autrui. On pourrait penser au cas du psychiatre de notre époque, à qui une famille ou une administration adresse un sujet qui ne veut pas se reconnaître malade, et qu'il est donc tenté d'étiqueter 'psychotique', le fait de ne pas admettre sa maladie (même appelé comme ici 'raison' ou 'sagesse') passant pour un des critères de la psychose, du moins si le thérapeute ne peut pas étendre son enquête à l'entourage du patient. Mais les fiches des *Quinze joies* nous livrent abondamment les relations du mari avec son entourage proche, et pourraient donc donner l'impression d'une 'psychiatrie familiale'.

Le Jeu des Interconnexions Sociales

Si l'enfermement sur soi de notre personnage est aussi voyant, c'est précisément parce qu'il est mis en contacts répétés, et même trop répétés, avec un milieu, ce qui pourrait suggérer l'étude d'un système d'interactions réciproques dans l'esprit de la psychologie de la communication.³² Cependant, il ne s'agit pas plus ici d'un milieu large que de contacts face à face entre deux individus en équilibre; malgré la fréquence des dialogues entre le mari et la femme, celle-ci n'est jamais vraiment seule dans ses entreprises. Le pantin singulier est manipulé par une pluralité de personnages individuels solidaires dans leur travail de manipulation.

Dans la VI^e Joie, on croit un moment qu'il va s'établir un équilibre entre un groupe masculin et un groupe féminin, avec les 'quatre hommes d'estat' que le mari doit recevoir convenablement pour les besoins de sa situation sociale, mais ils sont rejetés à priori par sa femme, et le pauvre homme se démène seul pour les accueillir. Non seulement ils n'ont pas de contact avec le groupe féminin,

³² Voir *ibid.* pour des exemples d'analyses de ce genre.

mais on ne voit même pas le mari en conversation directe avec eux, et ils repartent en se moquant de lui au loin. La communication est réduite au problème des fournitures matérielles permettant le contact social, ‘touailles et serviettes’ que la femme refuse au milieu masculin. La contrepartie pourrait se trouver dans la III^e Joie, où le mari est obligé, au contraire, d’assurer des fournitures matérielles au milieu féminin des ‘commères’: mais il s’agit alors de vin et non de serviettes; la symétrie n’est pas seulement déséquilibrée par l’obligation refusée d’un côté et remplie de l’autre, mais par le niveau culturel des fournitures; le mari se rabaisse en ne devenant pas seulement un valet de sa femme, mais un garçon de taverne, servant des ‘commères’.

On pourrait croire que le domaine sexuel ramène à un cadre binaire les rapports non langagiers et les adoucit. Mais l’accord érotique entre le mari et la femme ne joue son rôle homéostatique que dans le début de certains chapitres, pour préparer une rupture ou une cassure qui ne sera pas remise en cause: il n’y aura pas de ‘réconciliation sur l’oreiller’. En dehors de ces vagues prologues abstraitement résumés, les rapports sexuels n’apparaissent jamais comme l’effet d’un sentiment ou de la perspective d’assurer un ‘lignage’, mais, même chez le mari, d’une simple nécessité physique à satisfaire. C’est plus explicite pour la femme, quand on la compare à celui qui boit du mauvais vin par simple soif avant de goûter un grand crû (l’amant!): ensuite, quand l’amant n’est pas à sa disposition, la dame ‘par necessitez et deffault d’aulture en prend aucunefois pour passer sa soif et pour passer temps’, ce qui ne peut vouloir dire qu’elle prend un deuxième amant, comme le veulent des traducteurs, mais qu’elle accepte, faute de mieux, les avances de son mari, qui est ridicule par ce rôle de pis-aller.

Passons sur d’autres formes possibles de communication non langagière. La détente homéostatique du rire n’unit jamais les deux partenaires; les seuls rires se manifestent à l’intérieur de chaque milieu, loin du mari.³³ La violence ne joue aucun rôle positif, quand le mari finit par battre sa femme, ce qui n’est nullement présenté comme une solution machiste, mais comme un aveu de faiblesse inefficace et d’irresponsabilité.³⁴

La communication langagière demanderait sans doute une étude psycholinguistique précise, bien qu’elle soit limitée. Il y a tout un jeu de niveaux auxquels les rôles sont assumés, et de calculs pour susciter des réactions chez l’interlocuteur. Ces attitudes pragmatiques sont parfois liées au maintien des

³³ Dans le groupe masculin des ‘amis’, en VI, 172–75; dans le groupe féminin, en plusieurs passages, où la famille de la femme et les ‘commères’ *raudent* sur le ‘prudhomme’.

³⁴ Notations rapides du narrateur: II, 88–92; X, 56; XI, 262.

positions hautes ou des positions basses, ou à leur échange à titre de provocation, comme dans la III^e Joie, lorsque la femme affecte la position basse, amenant le mari à affecter la position haute (ll. 182–88 et 202–03: ‘vous avez tort’; ‘vous estes bien esmeüe et sans cause’), cet échange ne permettant au mari qu’une descente au premier degré des jeux de rôle, alors que la femme monte au second ou au troisième degré.

Le narrateur se place dans la perspective d’un jeu, un jeu quasi-scénique comme le montre souvent l’expression ‘jouer son personnage’, qui a une lourde portée à l’époque où l’on discute sur la valeur des discours ‘par personnages’ dans le *Roman de la Rose*.³⁵ C’est le camp féminin qui ‘joue son personnage’ le plus souvent; le mari est spectateur, il a déjà vu ‘jouer le personnage’ (VI, 36), mais il finit lui-même (sans que le mot soit employé!) par assumer aussi son rôle (par ex. III, 258–73). Quand on l’interroge sur son personnage, ‘quelle chiere fetes vous, compere?’ (XV, 215), il répond ‘je ne faz autre chiere’, c’est-à-dire qu’il prétend s’en tenir au premier niveau du jeu, ce qui le condamne au silence sur trois pages (XV, 217–96); en face d’un énorme afflux de discours, il ne peut que dire: ‘je le vy devant moy’. La parole le domine, et trace autour de lui un ballet étourdissant dont il est exclu.

Sa parole bloquée, qui s’asservit à une activité mécanique, le réduit à une normalité superficielle, celle que les sociétés définissent ‘par l’attitude de subordination instrumentale qu’elles valorisent sous le nom d’adaptation’;³⁶ il prend le milieu ‘comme un fait physique et non un fait biologique, un fait constitué et non un fait à constituer’, alors qu’il devrait ‘structurer son milieu’. Au fond, le lecteur ne se moque pas de lui parce qu’il est ‘inadapté’, mais parce qu’il est trop superficiellement adapté à son cadre social. Est-ce alors ce cadre qu’il faut mettre en cause?

Les Remous de l’Idéologie Sociale

Canguilhem était embarrassé, dans sa théorie du pathologique, par le cas du malade mental qui, comme notre ‘mari’, ne veut pas se reconnaître malade.³⁷ Mais, comme il avait situé la maladie au niveau de l’organisme individuel global

³⁵ Voir *Le Débat sur le Roman de la Rose*, trad. par Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion, 1977), en particulier pp. 64–65 pour la discussion du problème par Gerson.

³⁶ Canguilhem, *Le Normal et le pathologique*, p. 214.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 153, note

à la recherche de ses normes, il était tentant de transposer ce point de vue dans l'organisme social, et de situer à ce niveau la maladie mentale. Il avait mis en garde contre une transposition de ce type, mais elle a été plus ou moins tentée, en particulier dans l'ivresse démolisseuse liée à la rigolotion de 1968.³⁸ Les résultats de 'l'antipsychiatrie' et ceux des thérapeutiques d'inspiration marxiste ne semblent pas avoir été nets ni fructueux, dans les théories comme dans la pratique, mais on ne peut échapper à la prise en compte des cadres sociaux et de l'idéologie qui les sous-tend, d'autant plus que notre texte met en cause explicitement l'institution du mariage et l'économie du 'ménage'.

Ce texte s'en tient ainsi à un milieu social défini de façon étroite. Les autres composantes du cadre social, comme le 'lignage' (parenté verticale avec les ascendants et les descendants), la vie économique de la cité, les relations féodales, les rouages administratifs et judiciaires, n'interviennent que marginalement et dans leur rapport avec la cellule conjugale, conçue comme le lieu de relations quotidiennes déterminant l'essentiel des conduites, et intimement lié aux problèmes économiques d'un petit budget à gérer. Cette cellule est privilégiée selon le principe d'un isolement de laboratoire, tendant à définir ses caractéristiques propres.

Cet isolement artificiel n'est pas nouveau, il remonte au moins à Théophraste et avait été exploité abusivement par les théoriciens de l'autonomie du philosophe et du célibat du moine.³⁹ Mais cette visée trop ciblée et la mode littéraire de la 'fine amors' ont compliqué la portée idéologique d'un problème qui, en outre, se trouvait mêlé aux vicissitudes de la politique, comme l'a remarquablement montré Georges Duby dans son ouvrage sur le mariage, prudemment limité au début du XIII^e siècle.⁴⁰

La vie matrimoniale présentée dans nos *Quinze joies* n'a pas grand-chose à voir avec les modèles aristocratiques qui apparaissent dans les textes étudiés par Duby. On ne peut donc dire que Lorson ridiculisait un vieux modèle périmé. Aucune référence aux stratégies matrimoniales qui faisaient du mariage, selon la définition des ethnologues, un 'traité de paix entre deux clans ou portions de

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 188–91.

³⁹ Voir Delhay, 'Le dossier anti-matrimonial'.

⁴⁰ Voir supra note 12. On pourra se faire une idée de la vie 'normale' du couple au Moyen Âge par l'intéressante *Histoire de la vie privée*, éd. par Ph. Ariès et G. Duby, 5 vols (Paris: Seuil, 1985–87), II: *De la France féodale à la Renaissance* (1985). Cependant, cet ouvrage met surtout en valeur la vie dans la France seigneuriale des XII^e–XIII^e siècles et dans l'Italie urbaine du Bas Moyen Âge. La vie conjugale dans la France urbaine des XIV^e–XV^e siècles y est moins bien représentée.

clans normalement opposés', ou bien un moyen de manoeuvres subtiles pour soumettre les détenteurs d'une puissance locale à un groupe familial ou politique imposant sa supériorité. C'est que, vers le XIV^e siècle, un rétrécissement de la perspective a changé le point de vue.

L'action régulatrice de l'autorité ecclésiastique y a évidemment contribué, mais aussi la focalisation progressive de l'idéologie sociale sur une autre perspective que celle des lignages aristocratiques, qui voyaient eux-mêmes leur équilibre vital fondé de plus en plus sur des rapports économiques plutôt que sur des relations militaires, et auprès desquels se développait (bien souvent mêlée à leurs structures familiales, tant par des alliances matrimoniales que par le développement du fonctionnariat d'Etat) ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui une 'classe en progrès', sous le nom de 'bourgeoisie' cher aux historiens depuis cent cinquante ans. On a abusé du thème de la 'montée de la bourgeoisie du XIII^e au XIX^e siècle' pour des explications simplistes,⁴¹ mais aujourd'hui, fort heureusement, l'ontologisation des 'classes sociales' prétendument distinctes et détentrices de forces métaphysiques est orientée par les historiens vers la prise en compte de bien des nuances et des complexités.

Reconnaissons simplement, dans nos textes des XIII^e–XV^e siècles, la présupposition d'un modèle familial qu'on peut appeler artificiellement 'bourgeois', tout différent des modèles aristocratiques ou militaires des siècles précédents et des modèles ethnologiques. L'idéalisme philosophique ou clérical d'Héloïse est transposé sur la 'société civile', comme diraient nos politiciens, pour ramener l'union matrimoniale à un idéal curieusement matérialiste, celui du 'ménage'.⁴² Ce terme a gardé sa valeur aujourd'hui, on sourit de le retrouver dans une anecdote rapportée par Canguilhem.⁴³ Dès le XIII^e siècle, son expansion traduit l'obsession

⁴¹ Par ex., sur l'idée bizarre d'un Guillaume de Lorris auteur 'bourgeois', voir mon étude: 'Miniature, allégorie, idéologie: *Oiseuse* et la mystique monacale récupérée par la "classe de loisir"', dans *Etudes sur le Roman de la Rose de Guillaume de Lorris*, éd. par J. Dufournet (Paris: Champion, 1974), pp. 7–36.

⁴² Voir mes *Approches du Roman de la Rose*, pp. 62–63.

⁴³ Canguilhem, *Le Normal et le pathologique*, p. 130: à un médecin qui lui dit: 'ménagez-vous!' une mère de famille répond: 'me ménager, c'est bien facile à dire, mais j'ai mon ménage!' et Canguilhem commente: 'un ménage, c'est l'éventualité du mari ou de l'enfant malade, du pantalon qu'il faut raccommode le soir' . . . 'de la course au loin pour chercher le pain' etc. La réplique sur le même lexème montre bien la 'double contrainte', l'angoisse du 'ménage', plutôt dispersée chez la femme (cf. certains de ses discours chez Eustache Deschamps), mais tournant chez le 'mari' autour d'un pivot financier central, dont la relative abstraction accentue le ridicule.

d'une vie domestique quotidienne où la relation entre le mari et la femme, au lieu d'être intégrée à de larges perspectives sociales, s'enferme dans une interaction pouvant aboutir à la violence réciproque, par exemple chez Jean de Meun, qui cherche en vain à annuler ces dérives par son mythe égalitaire. Mais ce mythe égalitaire, malgré ses échecs évidents, est virtuellement à la base d'une conception du mariage qu'on peut appeler prudemment 'nouvelle', sans oublier pourtant ses racines antiques et patristiques.

Et en fait, c'est sur cette nouveauté que semble porter l'attaque de notre texte. Il n'attaque pas le vieux système aristocratique, il pointe seulement l'incompatibilité entre une conception individuelle et égalitaire du mariage et les nécessités de la vie sociale: par exemple, dans la XIII^e *joie*, le service armé nobiliaire ou royal — qui se combinait assez bien avec les anciennes conceptions matrimoniales. Mais aussi les accrochages du nouveau modèle avec les simples nécessités des activités professionnelles d'un juge, d'un fonctionnaire ou d'un marchand, ces activités pourtant essentielles dans la monarchie administrative et dans l'économie 'bourgeoise' qui se mettent en place. Il met le doigt sur certaines contradictions fondamentales de l'idéologie 'moderne'. Le mariage apparaît alors comme un 'état' et sa combinaison avec un 'état' plus professionnel paraît problématique.⁴⁴

Au fond, notre texte semble viser en profondeur les insuffisances du nouvel esprit matrimonial dans tout milieu socio-économique, et donc les insuffisances de toute théorie sociale égalitaire. Lorsque, dans la XII^e *joie* (ll. 15–16), devant une décision professionnelle à prendre, le mari dit à son interlocuteur: 'j'en parleray a ma femme', ou 'a la dame de notre maison', il s'abrite derrière un égalitarisme de façade, où une décision importante doit être prise en commun; il ne dit évidemment pas alors: 'c'est elle qui commande à la maison', comme le lui fait dire une traduction récente, car la gynécocratie domestique doit évidemment être occultée vis-à-vis du personnage extérieur, voire chez le locuteur lui-même, qui scotomise sa soumission.⁴⁵ La mythique soumission pseudo-courtoise, inversant le rapport de domination marital, est suggérée, montrant que, dans le couple — comme ailleurs! — l'égalité n'est jamais qu'un rêve.

⁴⁴ Voir mon article 'Un drôle de métier'.

⁴⁵ Le terme 'gynécocratie domestique' est employé par Aristote, en particulier dans sa *Politique*, V, II, II (γυναικοκρατία περί τὰς οἰκίας), dans un passage où il semble trouver normale cette domination de la femme à la maison, puisqu'elle explique pour lui la faveur rencontrée auprès des femmes par la tyrannie politique. Il serait intéressant de voir si ce passage du 'Philosophe' a eu de l'influence dans les querelles sur les femmes aux XIV^e–XVI^e siècles.

Notre auteur n'offre pas de solution de rechange. Il ne propose pas une société idéale, malgré l'influence de Jean de Meun, comme le feront naïvement des auteurs de la Renaissance, car nos *Quinze joies* affectent toujours un détachement scientifique qui ajourne toute décision thérapeutique et même tout vrai jugement. L'accablement ambigu du patient ne déclenche pas chez l'observateur une révolte, ni la révolte classique des moralistes traditionnels, ni la révolte grondeuse ou sceptique des hérétiques ou des humanistes. On laisse en arrière-plan une idéologie sociale qu'on ne juge sans doute pas solide, mais en face de laquelle on ne veut rien construire. On se contente de persifler sur la société où l'on vit.

Devant un problème social et moral trop difficile, la solution d'une littérature dédramatisante peut être d'assimiler l'absurdité fondamentale des choses à celle qui est inhérente au jeu, et de susciter la détente ludique, ouvrant ainsi la porte au rire.⁴⁶ Mais si le problème est présenté comme un jeu, il y a lieu de conseiller les joueurs, éventuels ou déjà engagés, pour les mettre en garde ou améliorer leur technique. La 'réception' du texte par des destinataires spécifiques est peut-être fictive, et les 'XV Joies' visent peut-être simplement à amuser n'importe qui. Il y a quand même lieu de définir des destinataires, même s'ils ne sont qu'un artifice imaginaire, dont l'existence virtuelle est, malgré tout, nécessaire au jeu de l'auteur.

Qui Veut-on Persuader?

La satire peut-elle, comme elle le prétend, 'corriger' les défauts qu'elle dénonce? Il est douteux qu'une dame romaine se soit 'corrigée' en lisant la satire VI de Juvénal, ou un casse-pieds en voyant jouer *Les Fâcheux*. En fait, la satire a pour rôle de contribuer à la mise en place harmonieuse des éléments dans une société se conformant à son idéologie 'correcte'. Du reste, dans la mesure où elle s'approche, comme ici, d'une description clinique, la satire—si paradoxal que cela paraisse—se dispense de proposer des remèdes aux vices qu'elle dénonce.

Elle engage pourtant le lecteur dans un jeu où il doit jouer son rôle, en partie sincère, d'énonciataire transmettant une entreprise de persuasion à un destinataire qui est censé infléchir finalement sa conduite ou ses jugements en fonction de la description proposée. Le lecteur a le droit de bien distinguer de lui-même ce destinataire, que l'auteur veut finalement manipuler en même temps qu'il

⁴⁶ D'où la présence inattendue de cette détente dans des oeuvres au sujet tragique; voir mon article: 'Le *Tristan* de Bérout, une tragédie ludique'.

manipule ses personnages devant lui. Si les filles à marier sont les destinataires des *Quinze joies*, on peut dire que le marionnettiste agite devant leurs yeux les ‘petits maris honnêtes’⁴⁷ en leur disant: ‘mariez-vous sans crainte, votre mari sera votre petit chien’ (les mères peuvent être les énonciataires intermédiaires . . .). S’il pense toucher les régents de collège, notre auteur leur dit: ‘orientez vos élèves vers la carrière cléricale, car, s’ils se marient, ils seront complètement abrutis’. Dans de telles interprétations de la ‘réception’ du texte, le mari est complètement exclu de la communication exhortative, ce qui, à la limite, le déshumanise, et permet aux participants de cette communication (auteur, énonciataires, ou même destinataires) de voir sous leur aspect comique ses insuffisances, qu’elles soient constitutionnelles ou temporaires.

La majeure partie des lecteurs est sans doute constituée d’adultes qui ont fait leur choix depuis longtemps vis-à-vis du mariage. Pour eux, le personnage du mari n’est donc pas une perspective d’avenir personnel, mais un type rencontré dans la vie courante, dans l’expérience présente: les temps employés obligent le narrataire à situer l’énonciation dans sa propre temporalité, et à faire partie, avec l’auteur, des ‘visiteurs du zoo’. Si (‘a l’aventure’, ‘puet estre’!) ce lecteur est marié, la ‘nasse’ sera pour lui un miroir. La conception médiévale du ‘miroir’ (*speculum* chez les moralistes) pose une représentation un peu déformante qui caricature pour chacun les risques abusifs de sa personnalité et lui permet de les atténuer en lui montrant leur ridicule: possibilité limitée . . . Quant aux lecteurs qui ne sont ni des maris, ni des conjoints éventuels, l’ouvrage leur sert simplement à classer tel type rencontré dans le système des ‘états’ ou du moins sur ses marges, en y voyant le cas d’un ‘drôle de métier’,⁴⁸ mais tout de même utile comme tous les métiers,⁴⁹ bien qu’on puisse en rire comme on rit des tisserands, des médecins, des moines ou des fauconniers. Tout ‘estat’, enfermé dans son activité caricaturale, est une sorte de handicap; le rôle du moraliste est de mettre en place les

⁴⁷ Ce jeu de mots est la base d’une chanson à la mode vers 1960, parodiant la ronde enfantine: ‘ainsi font, font, font les petites marionnettes [. . .]’. Les ‘petits maris honnêtes’, ‘petits maris trop bons’ y sont présentés tout à fait comme dans nos *Quinze joies*, mais avec un dénouement tragique (‘trois ptits tours et puis [. . .] dans l’fond’).

⁴⁸ Voir mon article: ‘Un drôle de métier’.

⁴⁹ L’idéologie fonctionnelle du Moyen Age s’exprime dans la meilleure version de la chanson ‘Sur la route de Louviers’, où le cantonnier, justifiant son ‘fichu métier’ devant la ‘belle dame’, lui répond: ‘c’est pour vous que j’travaillons / car vot’ carross’ s’rait embourbé / sans les pierr’ que j’ai cassées’; la dame comprend ainsi ‘qu’y faut pas s’moquer des gens / car dans not’mond’ pas toujours drôle / chacun joue son ptit bout d’rôle’.

‘estats’ en permettant à tout le monde de se faire une image ludique, mais vivable de la société.

L'Approche Clinique est-elle Ludique?

Dans une société qui, comme tout organisme vivant, tend à orienter ses normes anciennes et nouvelles vers une amélioration de son activité, chaque statut social actualise une sorte de quasi-maladie, qui, comme toute situation pathologique, représente à la fois le besoin de conserver un équilibre et le besoin de le dépasser.⁵⁰ Le rapport entre les besoins statutaires de chaque individu et son destin peut être vu sous un jour tragique, comme dans les *Danses Macabré* où la perspective de la mort de l'individu rend le statut absurde.⁵¹ Une eschatologie traditionnelle permettait un accord *post mortem* entre la pratique du statut et un classement dans la vie future. Matheolus, peut-être par simple jeu, entrait dans ce système en disant que le mari serait dispensé d'une part de purgatoire, déjà vécue dans sa vie conjugale.

Nos *Quinze joies* n'offrent aucune perspective de ce genre. Elles gomment même les véritables violences de l'existence: comme dans les BD de Mickey et de Tintin, le versement de sang est interdit, et les décès sont marginalisés (on passe vite sur une mort possible du mari en XIII, 93). C'est que le style apparemment 'sérieux' et scientifique de l'auteur est un jeu. Le leitmotiv 'et finera misérablement ses jours' n'évoque la mort que comme la vague perspective logique mais lointaine, sans rupture brutale, d'une vie où le dépérissement est toujours ramené à la fatigue ou au vieillissement, jamais à une blessure ou à une maladie grave. Un 'mari' ne meurt pas prématurément: il s'use, mais on peut continuer à jouer avec.

Le lecteur est donc invité à jouer. Les variantes de situation, même les plus abstraites, lui permettent de participer au jeu en introduisant d'autres marionnettes qu'il connaît mieux: 'il a une vieille épée, tiens, c'est comme ce marchand qui a une vieille balance [. . .]'. Il construit des scènes pittoresques avec ses propres souvenirs, en s'appuyant sur ceux de l'écrivain, qu'il a pu éprouver lui-même, mais qui lui suggèrent des situations parallèles. La détente purement sub-

⁵⁰ Je force à peine ici les idées de Canguilhem.

⁵¹ Voir mon article: 'Les *Danses Macabré*, une image en négatif du fonctionnalisme social', dans *Dies illa, Death in the Middle Ages*, éd. par J. H. M. Taylor (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1984), pp. 15-27.

jective propre au comique peut ainsi se débrider, en laissant au lecteur la supériorité de celui qui comprend encore mieux les choses que le spécialiste qu'il écoute.

Nous sentons plus ou moins, aujourd'hui, quelque mauvaise conscience quand nous sommes tentés de rire des violences ou des malheurs subis par autrui. Mais la satire médiévale n'oppose pas le rire à l'indignation ni même à la pitié. Dans le *Roman des Romans*, l'auteur se scandalise de voir les 'malveis home' exploiter les 'prodomes' et dit: 'Il poeples est en doloros martire / e cheün jor de totes parz empire: / ceo est merueille que il nos tient de rire!'⁵² Le rire est la réaction normale au scandale — comme, après tout, dans notre *Canard enchaîné* . . .⁵³ Le lecteur, l'auditeur est invité à voir de simples marionnettes dans les 'mauvais', mais aussi dans les 'doloros', victimes d'une détermination sociale à peu près inévitable.

Il sait bien que ces marionnettes sont des êtres de chair, qu'il rencontre tous les jours, sous la forme d'exemplaires authentiques du modèle, ou de cas analogues. Cela risque d'entraver son détachement, en déclenchant sa pitié, ou en lui posant le souci pratique d'un traitement possible ou non. Il faut donc que le texte le maintienne constamment en équilibre, et obnubile le problème de la responsabilité du malade, et celui de la distinction entre maladie curable et handicap définitif. En imposant trop nettement ces deux problèmes, le clinicien ou le témoin qui l'accompagne à l'hôpital ne se gâche pas seulement la vie, il risque de gâcher celle des patients, qui ont besoin de ne pas ressentir avec trop d'évidence la crainte d'être expédiés dans un des espaces d'exclusion de la société, celui des prisons ou celui des mouiroirs.

Ce besoin est paradoxalement satisfait par le rire du visiteur. Le malade se sent mieux s'il accepte son ridicule, s'il accepte au moins de sourire avec le médecin sur les fourmis qui lui montent dans la jambe gauche. Cette acceptation ne signifie pas qu'il admet un repentir sur ses imprudences passées, ou une solution thérapeutique définie pour l'avenir, bien au contraire. Le rire est l'acceptation du présent tel qu'il est, et ajourne les accusations ou les choix possibles.

Il n'est pourtant pas le signe d'une résignation occultée par une 'pieuse ruse'. Il laisse apparaître des possibilités pour un meilleur emploi du jeu biologique, au moins pour d'autres que le personnage analysé, et le procédé du récit typologique

⁵² Tanquerey, *Deux poèmes moraux anglo-français*, p. 53, ll. 290–92.

⁵³ 'Le rire est une volonté de nier, de suspendre et de dominer son effroi, son émotion, sa pitié, sa pitié [. . .] une tentative pour maîtriser certains affects par la médiation du langage', Henri Rey-Flaud, *Pour une dramaturgie du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), p. 93.

met toujours en scène des cas possibles dans l'avenir, au lieu d'un processus constaté trop tard. Ce sont donc ici tous les 'maris' imaginables — encore célibataires, ou déjà 'dans la nasse' — qui sont invités à mieux entrer dans le jeu, non pas en le jouant trop bien de façon caricaturale comme l'horrible mari de *Grisélidis* qui torture sa femme pour l'éprouver, ni, à l'opposé, comme le jeune premier des romans idylliques, qui réalise une union idéale bien invraisemblable (ou au moins, nous dit la XIV^e Joie, vouée à la précarité);⁵⁴ mais en le jouant tant bien que mal, le leitmotiv final des chapitres découvrant seulement le risque d'une attitude figée où l'on ne domine jamais son syndrome au moment voulu. Si bien que le lecteur pouvait être pris d'un rire franc, devant cette formule posant un cas aussi peu probable que celui de Bélise ou d'Argan chez Molière: l'invraisemblance de l'obstination ridicule est bien plus gratifiante que celle de l'idéalisation.

Si l'on doit 'finir misérablement ses jours', ce n'est qu'un cas-limite, celui d'une caricature, dont la réalisation n'est pas en alternative avec les caricatures équivalentes du 'macho', du chevalier oubliant sa femme, ou du moine qui s'enferme dans une 'nasse' bien pire (que dénoncent bientôt les évangélistes...), mais avec une conception souriante de la vie et des relations sociales. Le bon médecin est celui qui sait sourire avec son malade; et le bon satiriste est celui qui laisse la place aux médecines douces plutôt qu'aux chirurgies brutales. Son travail est, finalement, de bien situer les gens — des gens toujours hypothétiques, des types! — à leur place dans la société, une place correspondant à leur étiquetage, et finalement nécessaire; de leur prouver qu'ils ne se classent ni dans une catégorie idéale, ni dans un espace d'exclusion, mais que leur position, définie par un terme qui peut toujours prendre un parfum péjoratif ('mari', 'moine', 'juge', 'vilain' . . .), est instable et ambiguë, leur laissant des choix — ou des chances — qu'ils doivent assumer.

⁵⁴ Il faudrait une étude structurale montrant dans le mythe de Grisélidis une forme inversée de celui de notre *Pantoffelheld* (comme disent les BD allemandes). Voir déjà ci-dessus, note 16.

THE JEW ON MEDIEVAL MISERICORDS

Elaine C. Block

For Brian who loved the comedy of life

While there is not a plethora of Jews on medieval choir stalls, the Judaic images that do exist intrigue the viewer who wonders why they are there and what they signify. We would like to propose that the Jew, often presented as an ignominious creature, was at times shown respect while at other times he was mocked. This often rich and worldly group of people were at the same time parodied in various ways. Today we may not realize the mockery since we have lost much of the sense of the medieval world and ignore much that we should see.

Identifying the Jew

Before we consider the actions depicted on carvings of Jews, we must first recognize the figure as being Jewish rather than Christian or Arabic.

The Broken Noses

As a first clue we may note that several male heads on misericords, arm-rests, and *jouee* panels¹ have obviously large noses, way out of proportion to their other facial features.² At the Stiftskirche by the castle in Cappenberg near Dortmund

¹ 'Jouee' is the French word for the end panel of a set of choir stalls. There is no equivalent word in English.

² See the numerous profiles with crooked noses in the illustrations to Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).



Figure 1. Broken Nose. False Armrest, Cappenberg Collegiate Church [D].

(Fig. 1), at the nearby Reinalde Kirche in Dortmund, and at Marienheide (Fig. 2), the noses on false armrests³ look as if they have been broken several times. At Kalkar (Germany), a head carved in bas-relief on a *jouee* also has a nose that is distinctly misshapen. While most of these ugly and disproportionate noses are on choir stalls in Germany, the crooked nose, while less frequent, also exists in Spain, France, and Switzerland.

On the choir stalls of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne (Savoie), one misericord presents a triple head.⁴ It has one mouth, two eyes, and three noses: one flat as an African nose, one straight like a European nose, and the right profile has a crooked nose. Not every triple head on choir stalls shows a crooked nose, for others might signify Prudence, power, or the ages of Man, rather than, as this

³ This is a convenient name for the first and last carvings in a series of arm-rests that can help the sitter rise or sit down. These are done in bas-relief and therefore, while they are of no use to the sitter, they do complete the visual format of the set of arm-rests.

⁴ For further discussion on the triple-head motif refer to E. Block, 'The Triple Head Motif on Medieval Choir Stalls', *Reinardus*, 10 (1997), 45–57.



Figure 2. Large Nose. False Armrest, Marienheide Pilgrimage Church [D].

one probably does, the peoples of the world. A triple head at Estavayer and one at Coppet in Switzerland are similar to the one in French Savoie, whereas one at Rodez in the Aveyron has three straight noses.

Some of the owls on misericords have very crooked noses. When this is the case we must assume that they are stand-ins for Jews.

Cest oisel est orz et puanz [. . .]
 Nuit et tenebres aime adés,
 Bien est semblant qu'il sert mauvés.
 En cest oisel sunt figuré
 Li felon Jeue maleuré,
 Qui ne voudrent Dieu esgarder,
 Quant il vint ça por nos sauver [. . .]
 Li Jeue sunt en obscurité,
 Ne veient pas la verité ;
 Les tenebres amerent plus
 Que le verai solel la sus.⁵

⁵ *Le Bestiaire divin de Guillaume Clerc de Normandie*, ed. by C. Hippeau (Caen: Hardel, 1852; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1970), vv. 604, 607–12, 639–42.



Figure 3. Eyeglasses, Hat, and Large Nose. False Armrest, Kalkar St Nicholas Church [D].

The owl is the only bird with both eyes on the front of its face and the nose in the middle. It has a sharp beak to begin with and thus can easily be converted to a Jewish face. Such an owl is on a supporter⁶ of a misericord at St George's Chapel, Windsor. Below we shall see some owls with eyeglasses such as those at Windsor Chapel and St Andreas at Cologne.

Eyeglasses

The head with the crooked nose on the Kalkar *jouee* has a second mark of a Jew. He is wearing eyeglasses (Fig. 3). His head is tilted down, possibly trying to see

⁶ A supporter, or a carving at the side of the major carving, is a peculiarly English tradition and is included on the vast majority of misericords in Great Britain. Supporters, which have no equivalent term in French, are also on the Barcelona choir stalls and a few are in the abbey at Celanova (Spain). See the *Lexicon for Medieval Choir Stalls*, ed. by E. Block and F. Billiet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004) for proposed solutions to these problems.

something, but the glasses do not imply that he has correctable vision; they mean that he cannot see the light, the spiritual light, and therefore has no faith. This figure is dutifully praying with his rosary. However, the pendant to this carving is a donkey chewing his rosary beads. Neither figure therefore can be truly praying. On a misericord at Hoogstraten (Belgium) a vendor sells glasses to the blind. The buyer might not be a Jew, but he shares a quality with him: he does not see the light.

Owls may also wear glasses. One is on a *jouee* at St Andreas at Cologne (Fig. 4), another on a supporter at Windsor Chapel.

Beards

Beards may also identify Jews. Beards were not fashionable for Christians in France until the reign of François I. Jews, however, were bearded, invariably by edict. Furthermore, in some communities Jews were forbidden to cut or trim their hair or beard. A person with a ragged beard, provided he was not indigent or handicapped, is likely to be a Jew. He may be dressed reasonably well and wear a large hat, but he also has a scraggly beard.

The 'Judenhut'

In addition to crooked noses, beards, and eyeglasses, the Jew wears a special hat — the *Judenhut*.⁷ The shape of this hat changed over time but was prescribed by papal bull and local regulations to distinguish the Jew from all others. The hat is worn on choir stalls in Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, and Spain. A scene of gathering manna at Rödingen (Germany) shows the biblical Jews wearing *Judenhuts* (Fig. 5). At Erfurt Cathedral in Thuringen a contemporary Jew wears a round hat, probably metal, with a stick rising at the top, which marked the horns that supposedly grew on the heads of Jews. Sometimes these hats were shaped like funnels and sometimes they looked like monks' hoods or the bonnets worn by jesters. At Lund Cathedral in Sweden Joseph, in a Nativity scene from the New Testament, wears a *Judenhut*.

⁷ For further references, see R. Strauss, 'The Jewish Hat as an Aspect of Social History', *Jewish Social Studies*, 4 (1942), 59–72.



Figure 4. Owl with Eyeglasses. *Jouee*, Cologne St Andrew's Church [D].



Figure 5. Collecting Manna. *Jouee*, Rödingen Parish Church [D].



Figure 6. Drunken Noah (N-01). Misericord, Hereford Cathedral [GB]

Two misericords have never been accurately analyzed, one at Hereford Cathedral in England⁸ and one at León Cathedral in Spain. Yet in both instances the figure wears a Jew's hat, and this should provide a clue. At Hereford a nude man reclines; he has a long beard and his genitals are hidden between his legs (Fig. 6).⁹ This is probably Noah about to be mocked by two of his sons. The drunken Noah, closely described in the Bible, appears on several choir stalls, but with a revealing robe rather than in a naked state. Since he is bearded and wears a *Judenhut*, the Hereford misericord assuredly shows us a Jew. His reclining position and nudity make Noah a likely candidate for this image, not the wodehouse listed in the Hereford guidebook.

At León the figure is humanoid with ape-like features, its nakedness masked by his ape-like skin. He wears the standard Jew's hat and holds a mirror to his

⁸ This misericord is described in G. L. Remnant's *A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 61, as 'Reclining wodehouse (wildman) with flat hat'.

⁹ For descriptions of other Old Testament figures on medieval choir stalls, see E. Block, 'Judaic Imagery on Medieval Choir Stalls', *Reinardus*, 8 (1995), 25–47.



Figure 7. Humanoid with Mirror at Anus (SH-11). Misericord, León Cathedral [E].

anus (Fig. 7). The artist is certainly showing us that this figure is a Jew. We get the impression that the source of this man's knowledge of the world is through his anus rather than his eyes, ears, and mouth, for it is more important for him to see a reflection of the lower parts of his anatomy than of his face. We see clearly that this creature is wearing a Jew's hat, the conical cap with the stick on top. His actions are the opposite of Christians', since he looks at his rear end, rather than his face, as a source for his spiritual light.¹⁰ This carving is not merely an ape but a Jew with ape-like features.

Ornate Hats

Another type of hat also signified a Jew, but generally the Jew of the Old Testament rather than the contemporary Jew. These hats are imposing and ornate,

¹⁰ This carving is described as a clothed ape in an obscene position; the *Judenhut* is not mentioned. See M. D. Teijeira Pablos, *La influencia del modelo gótico flamenco en León: La sillería de coro catedralicia* (León: Universidad de León, 1993), p. 111.



Figure 8. Prophet with Hat. Dorsal and Spandrels, León Cathedral [E].

generally with upturned brims and ornaments which might be embroidered or sewn on. Most of these hats appear on Old Testament prophets, each identified as a Jew, who stand on dorsal panels backing the choir stalls. In fact their names are printed under each portrait (Fig. 8). They are also paired with bareheaded apostles and Christian saints. It is not likely that the Jewish prophets were designed to cast a shadow on their Christian counterparts. True, the bare head implies humility and renunciation of worldly material goods; however the fancy hats worn by the Jews might have appeared ridiculous on men otherwise considered worldly and wise. Were the hats intended to mock? If they are taken in context with the spandrels in the upper corners of their portraits, they are decidedly sinful items of clothing. The spandrel carvings are generally monsters or scenes of Lust and Gluttony. The bareheaded portraits of the apostles and saints generally include no spandrel carvings.

In addition to the dorsal Jews with their large hats, one ensemble of choir stalls in particular presents a series of men capped with large brimmed and decorated hats (Fig. 9). The only other misericord hats to match these in elegance are hats of nobles and kings, generally on English choir stalls. The hatted men on



Figure 9. Bearded Man (SH-07). Choir Stall, Nájera, Church of Santa Maria la Real [E].

the choir stalls of Nájera in Spain have other identifying marks which also denote their Jewish faith: they all have long scraggly beards and wear at least one bell on a chain around their neck. The carvers of this set are assumed to be a pair of Jewish brothers from the local community (Fig. 10). They have carved a dorsal panel of Madonna and child where the child's hair is in tight ringlets, like the hair of the Moors or the Jews.

On the choir stalls of Rouen Cathedral in France several robed figures wear tall or wide hats shaped like a cushion, usually with a knob on top. These men are engaged in various activities: some are sleeping; some are presenting a scroll (Fig. 11); and one is about to thrash his dog. All these figures are bearded and appear to be Jews. The man thrashing his dog may refer to the legend that Jews, since they ate no pork, ate their dogs.¹¹

¹¹ A similar misericord at Aarchot (Belgium) is so labelled.



Figure 10. Carver. Dorsal Panel, Nájera, Church of Santa Maria la Real [E].

Bells

The pharaoh on the crown of a *jouee* at Amiens Cathedral, asleep on a canopied chair, wears a string of jingle bells as a belt. Such bells indicated his high position and of course, jingled to signal his approach.¹² The men assumed to be Jews on

¹² Is it possible that there is a connection between the belled necklaces of Nájera and the Flemish proverb 'to bell the cat', depicted in Bruegel's proverb painting, and on misericords at Kempen and Emmerich (pre-war) in Germany? The bells were designed to alert the mice to the approach of a cat. The Christians could use this symbolism to refer to the approach of Jews.



Figure 11. Prophet with Scroll (NH-14). Choir Stall, Rouen Cathedral [F].

misericords at Nájera (Logroño, Spain) wear one or more bells on cords around their necks (Fig. 12). These bells certainly do not designate a fool, for the fool's bells are on ass-eared bonnets, scalloped tunics, and even on shoes. Also all the fool's bells jingle rather than just ornament the costume. The fool who plays the bagpipes at Nájera wears such bells, but not around his neck.¹³

The men with belled necklaces have various kinds of bells, not just the jingle bells. Some bells jingle, which may connote power and authority or at least command attention. That is the fool's bell. There is also a small bell, like a miniature church bell, known as the bell of St Anthony, which has a clapper (Fig. 13). This saint, and the members of his order, had the right to bring their pigs with them into town. Thus the Jew who wore such a bell would be akin to a pig and his presence in town noted. There is no evidence I can find stating that Jews wore such bells, although dorsal carvings show similar ornaments, but it is common knowledge that St Anthony's pigs wore clapper bells. The wearing of such a bell, even on a misericord, automatically associates the man with the unclean pig.

Bells were worn in ancient times by the Jewish high priests, generally as trim on the hems of their robes. When the priests moved, the jingling bells alerted

¹³ I am indebted to Frédéric Billiet for his research on bells.



Figure 12. Man with Ornate Hat (SH-07). Misericord, Nájera, Church of Santa Maria la Real [E].

their followers to the time for reciting their prayers in concert with the priest. Bells therefore might be used to mark a Jew.

The bells at Nájera (Spain) include the clapper bell and the jingle bell as well as ornamental tassels which also were part of the high priest costume.

The Purse and the Usurer

The purse also can mark a Jew. Such purses are usually attached to belts and might be used by any merchant who exchanged money. A scene therefore that showed merchandise transacted for money is probably not concerned with Jews. However, a full purse, often lovingly caressed, may well represent the usurious Jew who loved money for itself. Such purses may be on the dorsal portraits of prophets, but also on misericords representing moneylenders. These should not be confused with the pilgrim's purse, clearly marked with a cockle shell.



Figure 13. Bell Necklace (NH-15). Misericord, Nájera, Church of Santa Maria la Real [E].

Associations with Animals

Most of the people depicted on misericords, at least in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, interact with others like themselves. They work in shops with their wives or with apprentices at Rouen Cathedral. They warm themselves in a wintry kitchen at Ripple. They play pannoy as a contest of strength with an opponent of a different age or social class, but with someone who still belongs to the same spiritual club. When they appear with animals it is in hunting scenes or caring for livestock on the farm.

The Jew is presented quite differently. First of all he is associated with animals considered unclean, with those who are spiritually deficient, and even with animals associated with the devil.



Figure 14. Marrano Reading Book (NB-03). Misericord, Ciudad Rodrigo Cathedral [E].

The Jew and the Pig

Probably the greatest humiliation for the Jew is to be associated with the pig, an unclean animal whose flesh is forbidden food for the Jew. Those Jews who pretended to convert to Christianity but practised their faith in secret were called *marranos*. This word also referred to the pig. On misericords at Ciudad Rodrigo, carved about the time of the expulsion of Jews from Spain, we see several unusual pigs. One just stands and may refer to a marrano-Jew. One is reading in a book allegedly containing Jewish expressions and proverbs (Fig. 14). A third pig, reminiscent of the nun-pig in Jerome Bosch's 'Garden of Delights', shows a pig wearing a nun's coif and writing in a book (Fig. 15). This coif is certainly a disguise. Since a pig is not likely to be a nun, this might be a Jew disguising as a nun and practising her religion in secret. In addition she is probably leaving a sum of money to the Church as another indication that she has surely converted to the one true light. The association between Jews and the pig is so strong in this case that the Jew has become the pig. Pigs carved on northern choir stalls may spin or play music, but none of them reads or writes.



Figure 15. Nun-pig Writing (SB-02). Misericord, Ciudad Rodrigo Cathedral [E].

The Jew and the Owl

The Jew is also associated with the owl, since that bird sees only at night and not during the day. It has therefore turned away from the Christian faith. The Jew-owl therefore lives a different kind of life. An ape-physician treats an owl on a quatrefoil at Cologne Cathedral. Here are two of the base animals associated with the Jew, and the human physician is missing from the image. A similar scene is shown at the cathedral of Toledo (Spain). The owl that has no faith is being cured by the base instincts of man, the ape-physician. We realize from this scene that the owl's illness will only get worse.

The Devil's Helpmates

The goat and the ram are considered the devil's animals and even appear occasionally with the symbol of the Synagogue. However these animals are usually shown with women on misericords. At Villette in the Eure Valley (France) a woman is being born of a goat, its cloven hoofs dangling by her emerging head.

At Stendal Cathedral in Germany a nude woman rides backwards on a ram and another on a pig, each fondling the animal's genitals. These women may have no connections with Jews and simply represent the rampant antifeminist attitude of the medieval Church. However, the women-riders, according to the engravings of Grien and Dürer, are off to the witch's *sabbat*, and that word derives directly from the Jewish *sabbath*. Their aim is to seduce the devil.

Anti-Judaic Motifs

In addition to the generally ignominious marks of the Jew there are several iconographic motifs which tell us more about the Jew in Christian society. They appear in different regions of Europe.

The Mobbed Owl

The Mobbed Owl shows a standard owl with bent beak standing quietly on a branch. Around him a flock of small birds who can see in the light peck him actively and wildly, possibly trying to make him truly blind. Except for two instances, these Mobbed Owls are in English churches: Gloucester, Ludlow, Norwich, and Windsor Chapel. At Windsor there are two Mobbed Owls. Since the English misericords almost all have three carvings, the owl may be standing at the centre with the Christian Day Birds around him, or the pecking birds may be in the side supporters waiting to attack. One at Windsor is in the central scene with small birds attacking it. In the second scene the owl is the supporter for an elephant, but despite this protection it is attacked by birds. This owl has a hooked beak and wears glasses.¹⁴

The one scene of the Mobbed Owl on a continental misericord is at Les Andelys in the department of the Eure in France. There are no supporters at Les Andelys but the owl stands in the midst of the mobbing birds. This is not the only case in Normandy which shows English influence on misericords. There are, for example, similar scenes of illusionist tumblers at Rouen Cathedral and New College, Oxford. Another continental Mobbed Owl carving inhabits a dorsal panel of a base choir stall at Oviedo Cathedral in Spain.

¹⁴ In his book, *The Woodwork of the Choir in St George's Chapel, Windsor* (Windsor: Oxley and Son, 1933), M. R. James identifies these two scenes as mobbing the owl, but does not explain their significance, nor why one owl is wearing eyeglasses. See north high 25A and south base 8C (pages unnumbered) near the end of his book.



Figure 16. Christian and Jew Joust. *Jouee* North, Erfurt Cathedral [D].

The Judensau

At Erfurt Cathedral in central Germany a scene shows another relationship of the Jew to the pig: a large portion of the north *jouee* is devoted to a joust between a Christian and a Jew (Fig. 16). We know certainly that the two individuals represent the two faiths since the Christian carries a shield decorated with the Christian symbol of a fish and the Jew wears a typical Jew's hat with a protruding stick. In no way are these opponents equally matched or trained. The Christian is mounted on a fine horse and thrusts a lance before him. His feet are in stirrups and his Christian shield protects him. The Jew, on the other hand, is mounted on a sow with four very visibly full teats. The assumption might be that she is feeding the Jew, since no piglets are in sight. The Jew holds no lance and has no shield. Instead he clutches a branch of a tree which will swing back when he lets go. It might hit the Christian, but it might also swipe the Jew. This will happen in the next instant, possibly with enough force to unhorse the Christian.



Figure 17. *Judensau*. Historisches Museum Basel [CH].

The Christian has the use of the technological advances of the times while the Jew makes do with what is at hand.

The most onerous anti-Judaic motif is obviously the *Judensau*, of which the Erfurt scene is only a modest example. Generally the Jew, identified solely by his conical hat with a protruding spike, sits under the belly of a sow newly delivered of piglet Jews and suckles them.¹⁵ Two such Jews sit under such a sow on a misericord intended for Basel Cathedral in Switzerland (Fig. 17). However, public opinion persuaded the administration to remove it. Currently the original *Judensau* is stored in the reserves of the Basel history museum, while the copy from the cathedral is gone.

The *Judensau* on a *jouee* panel at Cologne Cathedral is still in its original place. The *Judensau* motif was so popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that it was a standard decorative item, but only in Germanic regions. At Xanten Cathedral in the Rhineland a *Judensau* supports a statue of the Visitation

¹⁵ For the whole story, see I. Schacher, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and its History* (London: Warburg Institute, 1974).

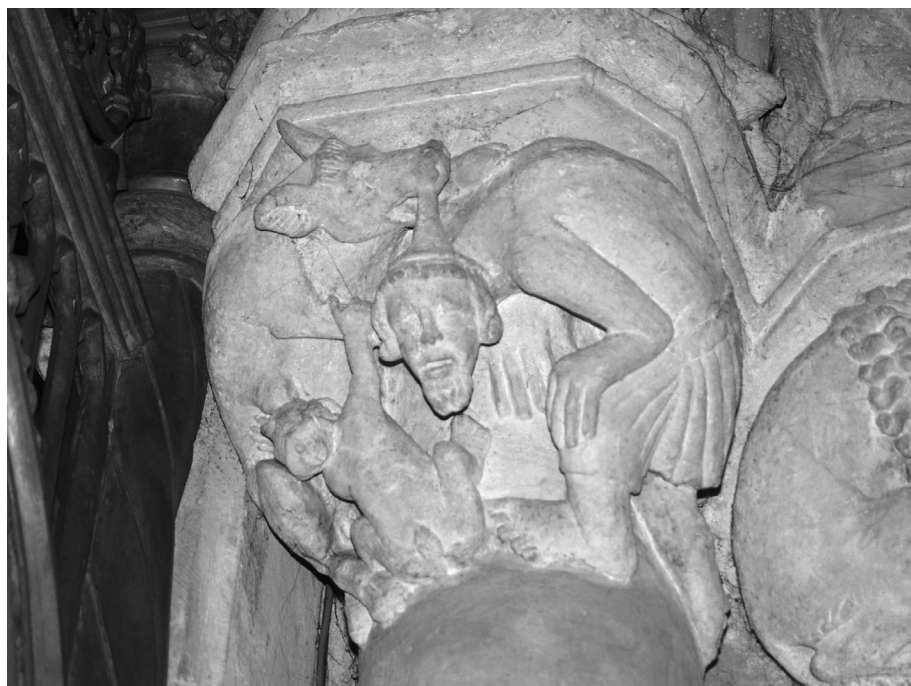


Figure 18. *Judensau*. Visitation Statue, Xanten Cathedral [D].

(Fig. 18). At Metz Cathedral (France) an unannounced *Judensau* is too high on the wall of a north chapel to be visible without strong binoculars. The *Judensau* at Magdeburg Cathedral in Germany is closer, on the corbel of a pillar, but it is in an area of the church which is barred to the public.

One misericord in France, at the little church of Pocé-sur-Cisse (Indre et Loire), may be related to the *Judensau* theme. A laughing boy attired in what looks like a fool's outfit sits on the floor by the rear-end of a pig. He is holding a jug, the lid open, in which he is trying to collect the pig's urine. Is this a Jew collecting his dinner? The figure is beardless, but perhaps it is too young for a beard. The outfit looks more like that of a fool, but there were times and areas when a fool's costume was similar to the prescriptions for Jews. This is the only misericord where a person not clearly identified as a Jew collects pig urine instead of cow milk.¹⁶

¹⁶ I thank W. Schouwink for helping me unravel this puzzle. See also his book, *Der Wilde Eber in Gottes Weinberg* (Stuttgart: Jan Torbeke Verlag Sigmaringen, 1985).

The vision of the *Judensau* is no worse on misericords than in other areas of the church. On a few woodcuts, however, the Jew in addition to suckling also holds up the pig's tail the better to consume its excrement.

Church and Synagogue

The general symbol for the Church in fifteenth-century art is a young woman standing tall. Her long wavy hair is attractively arranged under her crown. She is dressed fashionably and holds a banner in one hand and a chalice with the Host in the other. She sometimes appears at Christ's side in crucifixion scenes and also on *jouees* or dorsal panels of choir stalls. She is paired with another female figure which represents the Synagogue.¹⁷

This second figure, always at the crucifixion scene if the Church is present, shows a distinct contrast to the Church. At Aarschot in Belgium, where they are carved on the east *jouees* of the north and south stalls, the Synagogue stands, but not as straight as the Church. Her eyes are blindfolded to show that she cannot see the light. Her hair is in braids which seem interminable, hanging to her waist and continuing below the Tables of the Law. She wears the outfit of a country bumpkin. She holds a broken banner in one hand and the Tables of the Law are ready to crash to the ground. At Barcelona Cathedral the Church and Synagogue share one misericord (Fig. 19). At the collegiate church at Belmonte (Spain), Church and Synagogue more typically have their own space in the dorsal spandrels (Fig. 20).

Other depictions of the Synagogue are more derogatory. At León in Spain, for example, the synagogue wears a frumpy hat which covers her eyes, thereby blinding her. Even more complex was Hildegard of Bingen's vision of Synagogue as a tall barefoot woman with eyes closed; on one arm sits the infant Moses holding the Tables of the Law. He wears the *Judenhut*, then prescribed in Germany. Another variation showed the devil shooting an arrow to blind the Synagogue.¹⁸ In every case the Church incorporates faith and communion with God, while Synagogue is mourning, blindfolded, and ready to drop the Old Law.

¹⁷ P. Hildenfänger, 'La figure de la Synagogue dans l'art du Moyen Âge', *Revue des Etudes Juives*, 89 (1930), III-34.

¹⁸ Described in Ch. Singer, 'Allegorical Representations of the Synagogue in a Twelfth-Century Illuminated Manuscript of Hildegard of Bingen', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 5 (1915), 93-III.



Figure 19. Church and Synagogue (SW-or). Misericord, Barcelona Cathedral [E].

Conclusion

The motifs of the Mobbed Owl, the Marrano Pig, and the *Judensau*, in addition to the identifying marks of the crooked nose, the straggly beard, and the pilus, the horned hat, and also the details of clothing, the purse, and the bell, do not add up to a spectacularly degenerate or horrible picture of the Jew. On choir stalls Jews are not hanged with their dogs, nor are they tortured or lapidated as are other martyrs. They treat owl patients, joust on pigs, read and write although disguised as pigs. Their elaborate hats and decorated purses place them in humorous comparison with the simple saints, barefoot and bareheaded. St Anthony's association with the pig was not derogatory but, taken a bit further with the Jew, it was not a very proper image of a social model.

The examples of choir stall iconography of Jewish images are largely from Germany and Spain, with Great Britain contributing the major share on Mobbed Owls. The *Judensau* appears only in Germanic regions, except possibly



Figure 20. Church and Synagogue. Dorsal Spandrels,
Belmonte Collegiate Church [E].

for the urine collection in the Loire Valley. Spain shows more straggly bearded and elaborately hatted figures on misericords (not considering the dorsal panels) possibly because these were the years of the Expulsion of Jews from Spain. Judaic imagery is therefore exhibited unequally over the face of Europe.

In short, while the Jew on choir stalls is not depicted in a positive light, neither is he an object of terror nor a helpmate of the devil! With his crooked nose, his eyeglasses, his large hat, his friendship with apes and pigs, he is rather shown as an object of ridicule, one to be laughed at but not feared.

*Summary of Judaic Iconography*¹⁹**Broken Noses**

- [CH] Estavayer-le-Lac (NB-04)
- [CH] Coppet (SB-05)
- [D] Cappenberg – false armrest
- [D] Dortmund Reinalde kirche – false armrest
- [D] Kempen – false armrest
- [E] Astorga (NB-11)
- [F] Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne (Savoie) (SH-05)
- [F] Saint-Léonard Noblat (NB-08)

Beards

- [B] Aarschot – false armrest
- [CH] Moudon, Geneva (Savoie) – dorsal panels
- [E] Nájera (SH-07)
- [F] Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne (Savoie) – dorsal panels

Imposing Hats

- [CH] Coppet, Estavayer, Geneva – dorsal panels
- [E] Astorga, León, Oviedo, Plasencia – dorsal panels
- [E] Nájera (NB-08) (NH-15)

Judenhut

- [B] Aarschot Notre Dame (SB-01) – *prodigal son*
- [B] Aarschot Notre Dame (SB-07) – *companions of Moses*
- [B] Aarschot Notre Dame (SH-03) – *mounted on horse backwards*

¹⁹ The letters in brackets, identical with postal codes, stand for the country. If the carving is on a misericord it is numbered according to the system used in E. Block, *Corpus of Medieval Misericords in France: XIII–XVI Century* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003). If the image is carved on another structure of the choir stall, that element is listed. Where necessary the subject of the carving is also listed.

- [B] Aarschot Notre Dame (SH-04) – *on peasant*
- [B] Aarschot Notre Dame (NA-02) – *man kissing dog*
- [B] Hoogstraten St Catherine (NB-12) – *arrest Christ*
- [B] Hoogstraten St Catherine (SB-06) – *vendor*
- [B] Hoogstraten St Catherine (SB-12) – *arrest prisoner*
- [D] Erfurt Dom – *jouee – joust*
- [D] Rödigen – *jouee – collect manna*
- [E] León Cathedral (SH-07) – *on humanoid ape*
- [F] Lorris (NB-04)

Associations with Apes

- [D] Koln Dom – *quatrefoil – ape with owl patient*
- [E] Toledo Cathedral (N-03) – *ape treats owl*

Associations with Pigs

- [E] Ciudad Rodrigo (SB-04) – *standing pig*
- [E] Ciudad Rodrigo (NB-03) – *pig reading*
- [E] Ciudad Rodrigo (SB-02) – *nun-pig writing*

Mobbing the Owl

- [E] Oviedo Cathedral – *dorsal panel*
- [F] Les Andelys (Eure) (N-04)
- [GB] Beverley Minster (NB-09)
- [GB] Gloucester Cathedral (S-09)
- [GB] Ludlow St Lawrence (S-12)
- [GB] Oxford Magdalen Chapel (W-06)
- [GB] Norwich Cathedral (NH-17)
- [GB] Norwich Cathedral (ST-02)
- [GB] Windsor St George's Chapel (NB-18)
- [GB] Windsor St George's Chapel (NH-25)

Judensau

- [CH] Basel Dom (reserves of history museum)
- [D] Erfurt Dom – *jouee* north
- [D] Cologne Dom – *jouee* north
- [F] Pocé-sur-Cisse (S-05) – *collect urine from pig*

Synagogue

- [B] Aarschot – south-east *jouee*
- [B] Hoogstraten – armrest
- [E] Astorga Cathedral – dorsal panel
- [E] Barcelona Cathedral (SW-01)
- [E] Belmonte Collegiate Church – dorsal spandrels
- [E] León Cathedral – dorsal panel
- [E] Oviedo Cathedral – dorsal panel

All the photographs in this essay were taken on-site by the author.

Porous Boundaries

BEAST EPIC, FABLE, AND FABLIAU:
LE CHASTOIEMENT D'UN PÈRE À SON FILS

Keith Busby

Or ce que plus s'i delitast,
Qu'il li sist ou qu'il li coitast,
I mist deduiz et beaus fabliaus
De genz, de bestes, et d'oiseaus. (A, vv. 71–74)

The Old French adaptations of the *Disciplina Clericalis* of Petrus Alphonsus, traditionally known by the title *Le Chastoïement d'un père à son fils*, have been little studied, despite the considerable interest they hold.¹ There are two distinct redactions in verse, both dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and a prose version from the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth. I will here limit my discussion to the verse texts, concentrating on the Norman version (A), comparing it occasionally with what is in all likelihood originally an Anglo-Norman version (B). All of the texts were edited in exemplary manner by Alfons Hilka and Werner Söderhjelm, although they are rather difficult of access.² There are six manuscripts of A (one currently lost),

¹ Yasmina Foehr-Janssens, who is preparing an electronic edition of the French texts, proposes retitling them collectively *Fables Pierre Aufors*. Pending the completion of this project, I shall continue to use *Chastoïement*.

² *Petri Alfonsi Disciplina Clericalis*, ed. by Alfons Hilka and Werner Söderhjelm, vol. I: *Lateinischer Text*, Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicæ, 38.4 (Helsinki: Societas Litterariae Fennicæ, 1911); vol. II: *Französischer Prosatext*, *ibid.*, 38.5 (1912); vol. III: *Französische Versbearbeitungen*, *ibid.*, 49.4 (1922). The edition of version A by Edward D. Montgomery, *Le Chastoïement d'un père à son fils* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), is seriously deficient and cannot be recommended for scholarly use. There is an English translation (of a German translation!) of the Latin text: *The 'Disciplina Clericalis' of Petrus Alfonsi*, trans. by Eberhard Hermes, trans. by P. R. Quarrie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

and the same number of **B**, including some celebrated codices, such as Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 19152 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86. The presence of version **B** in the continental fr. 19152 suggests that the transmission of the two versions may have intersected at some point. The manuscript context of both is significant in that it suggests a compatibility not only with a corpus of didactic and religious texts (including the *Ysopets*), but also a perceived affiliation of various kinds with more obviously secular material, in particular romance and fabliau, but not excluding the *chanson de geste*.

London, British Library, Additional MS 10289 of version **A**, for example, is the sole witness to the scatological fabliau of *Joulet*, while Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 12581 preserves *Des tresces*, and Pavia, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS Aldini 219 includes *Le Bouchier d'Abeville* and *Le Chevalier à la robe vermeille*. As regards version **B**, BnF, MS fr. 19152 is the celebrated fabliau manuscript *D* (it also contains Marie de France's *Ysopet*), while Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86 is a large trilingual manuscript including an Anglo-Norman version of *Les Quatre souhaits saint Martin* and a rare Middle English fabliau, *Dame Sirith and the Weeping Bitch* (an analogue of *Disciplina Clericalis* XIII, preserved in all French adaptations). Interplay with the romance genre can be illustrated by the additions to the text of version **A** in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS nouv. acq. fr. 7517, which draw directly on *Hunbaut*, *Partonopeu de Blois*, and some lost romances.³ There seems to be a particularly close relationship with *Partonopeu de Blois*, as this romance is also preserved in two manuscripts of version **B**, fr. 19152, with an extract in the former Phillipps 4156, now Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS 395. In London, British Library, MS Harley 527, version **B** is accompanied by *Gui de Bourgogne* and *Horn*.

Primarily during the second half of the thirteenth century (and with two of the Anglo-Norman manuscripts from the first half of the fourteenth), the *Chas-*

³ See Hilka and Söderhjelm (*Französische Versbearbeitungen*), p. xi, and *Hunbaut*, ed. by Margaret Winters (Leiden: Brill, 1984), pp. 118–22. On BnF, MS nouv. acq. fr. 7517, see Paul Meyer, 'Notice d'un manuscrit appartenant à M. le Comte d'Ashburnham', *Bulletin de la Société des Anciens Textes Français*, 13 (1887), 82–103; Alfons Hilka, 'Plagiate in altfranzösischen Dichtungen', *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, 47 (1925), 60–69; and Hilka, 'Die anglonormannische Kompilation didaktisch-epischen Inhalts der Hs. Bibl. nat. nouv. acq. fr. 7517', *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, 47 (1925), 423–67; and most recently, Olivier Collet, 'Armes et Amour ou amour sans armes? Un aspect négligé de la circulation et de la réception du *Roman de Partonopeu de Blois* au XIII^e siècle', forthcoming in *Partonopeus in Europe*, ed. by Penny Eley and others.

toisement was relatively widely diffused and kept diverse codicological company. The didactic texts and didactic elements of other narrative forms draw the *Chastoisement* into the manuscripts at the same time that its own more secular features anchor it firmly in them and in the wider corpus of vernacular literature of the time. In this essay, which I offer in memory of my dear friend and colleague, Brian Levy, I shall attempt to show how the text of the *Chastoisement* anticipates and shows early knowledge of other narrative genres which come to surround it in the manuscripts.

The first indication that the transformation of the Latin *Disciplina Clericalis* into the vernacular *Chastoisement* necessitates generic adjustment may be in the exemplum of the ant, the cock, and the dog at the end of the prologue. In the Latin, it is presented simply as an anaphora of negative imperatives ('Fili, ne sit [. . .]'), whereas the French version **A** adds a dialogue between the ant and a grasshopper (the latter insect absent in the Latin), essentially transforming it into the well-known fable found in the *Romulus* and a number of related Old French *Ysopets*:⁴

Dist li formiz: 'Ce est abet.
Or me dites, sire crequet,
Dont vos servez en esté
Quant je porchaçoue le blé.'
Ce dist le crequet: 'Je chantoue
Sur ma fosse et me delitoue,
N'aveie garde ne porpens
Que ja mais fausist cil beaus tens.'
'Sire crequet,' dist li formiz,
'Vos entendiez as deduiz,
Au chanter, a l'esbaneier,
Et je au forment porchacier
Dont je vivrai or ça dedenz,
Et vos en avreiz fain as denz.
Gart or chascuns ce que il a:

⁴ The Latin 'De formica et cicada' from the *Romulus*, IV, 19 is in Léopold Hervieux, *Les fabulistes latins*, 5 vols (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1893–99; repr., New York: Burt Franklin, 1965), II, 232; it is included in most of the Latin derivatives of the *Romulus*, and the *Avianus*, XXXIV, in *ibid.*, III, 283. It also appears in Marie de France, *Die Fabeln*, ed. by Karl Warnke (Halle: Niemeyer, 1898), XXXIX; the *Isopet II de Paris*, XXVIII, ed. by Julia Bastin, in *Recueil général des Ysopets*, vol. I (Paris: SATF, 1929), pp. 86–87; and the *Ysopet de Chartres*, XXVI, in *ibid.*, pp. 150–51. It is absent from the tradition descended from Gualterus Anglicus, from the first Paris *Ysopet*, and from the *Ysopet de Lyon*.

Bien sai que qui me loëra
 Que me desgarnisse por vos
 N'est pas de mon pro trop gelos.' (vv. 179–96)⁵

There are no particular textual correspondences to suggest borrowing from an *Ysopet* (or from the *Chastoieiment* in one or more of the *Ysopets*), and the *Chastoieiment* may derive directly from a Latin text. Whatever the case, the author of version **A** of the *Chastoieiment* has in the event produced another vernacular redaction of the fable.

The *Disciplina* (III, VI, and XII) and the *Chastoieiment* contain several tales about poets and performers. The vernacular versions transpose the Latin terms *versificator* and *fabulator* literally as *versefieres* and *fableor*, and there appears to be a distinction between the former, also called *clers*, and the latter, not so designated. *Disciplina* XXI is concerned with two rival *joculatores* (*jugleors*) although there is no indication that their skills are verbal or narrative. The presence of these tales lends a strong performative character to the text, which is already basically cast in the form of a dialogue between the father, as narrator and glossator, and his son, as audience and respondent. In response to three poets competing for his favour (III; vv. 731–898), a king tells a tale of a fox and a mule, the moral of which is not to be ashamed of one's lowly parentage (in the mule's case, an ass for a father). In the Latin text and version **A** of the *Chastoieiment*, the king claims to have read the fable in a book:

Ait rex: 'Fabulam quandam in libro quodam legeram, quam his oculis conspicio.' (p. 9, vv. 17–18)⁶

Ce dist li reis: 'Jel vos dirai:
 Une fable jadis trovai
 En un livre tot autresi
 Come je l'oi orendroit ci.' (vv. 805–08)

In version **B**, the tale is said to be a 'cunte', not a fable:

Un cunte li reis lur a dit:
 'En un livre truvai escrit,
 Si l'ai truvé apertement,
 Sil vus dirrai cumfeitement.' (**B**, vv. 819–22)

⁵ References to the French *Chastoieiment* are to version **A** in Hilka and Söderhjelm, vol. III, unless otherwise specified.

⁶ References to the Latin *Disciplina* are to Hilka and Söderhjelm, vol. I.

The most conspicuous and significant difference, however, is between version **A**, on the one hand, and the Latin text and version **B**, on the other. In the latter two, the protagonists are simply ‘mulus’ and ‘vulpis’ and ‘mul’ and ‘goupil’ respectively, while in the former the fox is called ‘Renart’. The tale in **A** remains an *Æsopic* fable, but it gravitates towards the world of the *Roman de Renart*, implying that its intended audience was familiar with the romance fox. It is surely no coincidence that this fable (‘De vulpe et mulo’) immediately follows that of the ant and the grasshopper in the Munich *Romulus*,⁷ suggesting a close relationship between the *Chastoiment* and this particular branch of the Latin fable tradition. The commingling of the fable and Renart traditions is continued in the next tale of version **A**, ‘De l’homme et du serpent’ (*Disciplina* V, ‘Exemplum de homine et serpente’, derived from Phædrus), where the fox called in to adjudicate between the peasant and the snake is once more called Renart, in contrast to the Latin text and version **B**. Version **A** does not designate the tale generically, while **B** follows the Latin by referring to it, as usual, as an ‘essample’ (v. 881).⁸

The tale of a *clerc* changed because he falls unwittingly in with bad company in a tavern leads into a series of three stories about wicked women (whose company can be equally fatal). The son responds to his father’s initial warning about women by requesting ‘Aucun fabel, aucune rien’ (v. 1147; ‘sive de fabulis sive de proverbiis’, p. 14, v. 3) so that he may be on his guard against feminine wiles. In the Latin *Disciplina* (p. 14) and the *Chastoiment* version **A**, the father is reluctant to comply because he fears that his stories intended as negative exempla will be interpreted by naive readers as endorsing immorality. Version **A** interestingly suggests that the room for misinterpretation is created by the passage from the oral to the written, from his ‘paroles’ to the son’s ‘escripture’, and the inability to choose or control audience- or reader-response:

‘Fiz, plusors choses te contasse
De lor engien, se je osasse;
Mais je vei bien que tu veuz metre
Tot quant que je te di en letre,
Si orra teus par aventure
Mes paroles en t’escripture

⁷ Hervieux, *Les fabulistes latins*, II, 272–73; there is a truncated version in the Bern text, *ibid.*, p. 304. I can find no vernacular verse fable of the fox and the mule.

⁸ The use of the proper names Renart and Ysengrin is quite common in Old French *Ysopets*. See my *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols, Faux Titre, 221–22 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), I, 216–21.

Qui tot a mal atornera
 Ce que solement dit sera
 Por home estruire et doctiner
 Et por saveir sei mieuz garder.
 Si ira el, quer teus orra
 L'engien que l'autres fait avra,
 Qui mauvais essample i prendra
 Et autresi ressaiera.' (vv. 1149–62)

The three tales which follow (*Disciplina* IX, X, XI; vv. 1175–1465) are all of the 'Ciel! Mon mari!'-type, in which the husband returns unexpectedly while the wife is occupied with her lover; in all three tales, the husband is deceived while the lover escapes, in two cases with the help of her conniving mother. These tales are essentially fabliaux, designated exempla in the rubrics to the Latin text, although the son's initial request had used the word 'fabulis'. Rather than 'fable', the redactor of the *Chastoiement* version **A** consistently employs the word 'fablel' or 'fableaus' to refer to these stories: 'Qui teus fableaus auques orroit' (v. 1248), 'Beaus fiz, le tierz fablel orras' (v. 1333),⁹ and the sequence is referred to as 'Ces treis fableaus' (v. 1449). In version **B**, the third tale is referred to as a 'cunte' (v. 1168) and the sequence as 'Treis cuntes' (v. 1236). Version **A** would therefore seem to underline more strongly the relationship of the *Disciplina's* exempla to the vernacular fabliaux, not yet at the height of its popularity. While the word 'fablel' could literally be taken as a diminutive of 'fable', and may be intended as such by both father and son (neither of whom appear at first sight to be intent on amusing themselves), the reader or listener surely understands the word in the sense of fabliau or is at least aware of the extended meaning and the irony it creates in the context. Indeed, these stories bear all the hallmarks of classic fabliaux: the faithless wife and her lover, the gullible husband, the go-between, bed-hopping, hiding beneath the sheets, interrupted repasts, visual deception, and so on. The vocabulary is also that of the 'conte à rire en vers' in the *stylus humilis*: 'engien' (vv. 1176, 1245, 1444), 'lecheor' / 'lechierres' (vv. 1182, 1199, 1279, 1286, 1300, 1314, 1349), 'feintise' (v. 1232), 'engignose' (v. 1244), 'cointise' (v. 1257).

The relationship between father and son comes to resemble more and more closely that between a storyteller and a contentious and impatient patron. To the son's demand for more stories, the father replies with the tale of the King of France and his *fableor* (vv. 1450–1580): unable to sleep, the king requests an additional, lengthy, 'fable' to supplement the usual five he is told every night.

⁹ BnF, MS nouv. acq. fr. 7517 has 'la tierce fable' at this line, the feminine forms preserving the metre.

Desirous of sleep himself, the *fableor* relates the tale of a peasant who has to ferry a large flock of sheep two at a time over a river. At this point in the story, the *fableor* falls asleep and reproaches the king for waking him, saying that the river is broad, the boat slow, and the flock large. They may just as well sleep while the sheep are being ferried over. The king takes the joke in good part and lets the *fableor* go for the night. The father then threatens to pull a similar trick on his son, but the latter astutely and ingeniously points out that whereas the *fableor*'s sole purpose was to amuse his master,

'vos me devez chastier
Et doctriener et enseigner
Ne je por el nel vos demant
Ne ne vos vaiz si enquerant.' (vv. 1473–76)

One has to wonder whether we are meant to be suspicious of the son's stated motives here: is he really such a keen pupil that he cannot get enough edifying narrative? Or is it simply a means of prising more amusing tales about women from his father? The question is legitimate insofar as the father himself, as noted above, raised the issue of whether his words can be (mis)interpreted as exempla for emulation rather than avoidance. Per Nykrog has also pointed out that on no other subject does the son seem quite so keen as on that of women.¹⁰ The relationship of the *Chastoient* to the fabliau is made even clearer by the next tale (*Disciplina* XIII, 'Exemplum de canicula lacrimante'), the tale of the weeping bitch ('De celle qui fist la lissete plourer' in the Pavia manuscript), an analogue of the Middle English *Dame Sirith*, extant only in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86, which also contains version **B** of the *Chastoient*.¹¹ The son has obviously succeeded where the king failed, for not only is his persistence rewarded with a story, but at three hundred and seventy lines, it is one of the longest tales, and exactly what the king had requested of his *fableor* ('une longue m'en conteras', v. 1481).

¹⁰ Per Nykrog, *Les fabliaux: Etude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médiévale* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1957), p. 60.

¹¹ Now available in the facsimile edition published for the Early English Text Society, *Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, with an introduction by Judith Tschann and M. B. Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). The *Chastoient* ('Ci comence le romaunz peres aunfor coment il aprist et chaustia sun cher fiz. belement') is on fols 74v°–97v°, with 'De une veille e de une lissete', on fols 84v°–85v°. *Dame Sirith* is to be found on fols 165r°–168r°, with the *incipit*, 'Ci comence le fablel et la cointise de dame siriz'. Notable are the use of the words 'fablel' and 'cointise', and the use of French for the *incipit* of a Middle English poem.

Disciplina XIV ('Exemplum de puteo') is rubricated in BL, Additional MS 10289, 'De celui qui enferma sa femme en une tour', and relates the story of a young man who learns all he can about women's trickery in order to avoid being deceived by his wife. He has her locked up in a tower with a single door and one high window. From the window, she sees a 'dameisel', with whom she falls in love and whom she contrives to meet by leaving the house when she thinks her husband is drunk. However, one evening he remains sober and locks her out; when she threatens to drown herself in a well (throwing a stone in it to simulate the sound of her hitting the water), she rushes in as he rushes out and locks the door on him. Although this tale is not referred to in either version of the *Chastoïement* as a 'fablel', it would not be out of place in a collection of fabliaux and brings the sequence of antifeminist stories, interrupted only by the comic interlude of the somniferous sheep-ferry, to a total of five. Additionally, the theme of the *mal mariée* imprisoned in a tower is redolent of courtly literature and may even evoke the *lai* ('Yonec' and 'Laüstic', for example), rendering the intertextuality more complex still.

It is not insignificant that Nykrog, in his classic study of the the fabliaux, admitted these five stories to his corpus (nos 60, 66, 99, 144, and 147),¹² although Van den Boogaard does not even mention them in his prefatory article to the *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*.¹³ Nykrog's arguments are perfectly convincing: these stories conform to a type of fabliau whose parameters can be established elsewhere and they are also, as I have mentioned above, designated as such in version A.¹⁴ If this redaction of the *Chastoïement* indeed dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century, it suggests that both the genre and its lexical designator were already well established by that time, and that they may even have been moderately well developed during the last decades of the twelfth.¹⁵

¹² Nykrog, *Les fabliaux*.

¹³ Nico van den Boogaard, 'Le Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux (NRCF)', *Neophilologus*, 71 (1977), 333–46; there is no trace in subsequent publications of the appendix mentioned on p. 336, in which Van den Boogaard suggested 'borderline' texts would be published.

¹⁴ Nykrog, *Les fabliaux*, p. 16.

¹⁵ Against this might militate the use of the word 'fableaus' / 'fablel' to describe the 'King Lear' story of a king and his two daughters in the unique addition (tale XXV) to version A in BL, Additional MS 10289. Montgomery has 'Uns fables' at his v. 4363 (and no rejected reading), while Hilka and Söderhjelm have 'Uns fableals' (p. 159, col. b); the latter is grammatically correct. All give 'le fablel' at Montgomery, vv. 4656 and 4658 (Hilka and Söderhjelm, p. 162, col. b).

Since this was almost certainly not the case when the *Disciplina* was composed towards the beginning of the century, it seems clear that the Latin tales resonated sufficiently with the **A** adaptor for him to recast them as fabliaux and to endow them with a new kind of intertextuality, the potential for which was being created by the vernacular *Gattungssystem*. The successful integration of these tales as fabliaux into the corpus is confirmed by the fictitious attribution in its *explicit* to 'Pierres d'Anfol' (i.e. Petrus Alphonsi) of the fabliau 'Le chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame':

Pierres d'Anfol, qui ce fablel
 Fist et trova premieremant,
 No fist fors por enseignemant
 A cez qui parler en feroient,
 Se tele aventure trovoient;
 Car nus ne l'ot qui n'an amant,
 Se mauveistiez trop nel sorprant. (vv. 247–53)¹⁶

As Willem Noomen points out, the 'fablel' referred to in v. 247 is most likely to be understood as the Latin source, real or fictitious, probably in the form of an exemplum, of the actual Old French fabliau.¹⁷ In this case, the word 'fablel' and knowledge of its meaning in the vernacular has in turn transformed the exemplum into a Latin fabliau. Nevertheless, despite the 'supercherie', the author of the fabliau has surely understood the didactic function of the *Disciplina* and, like the father, the possibility of misinterpretation and abuse when the tale falls into the wrong hands or upon the wrong ears.

There is a long tradition of disputes between performers, which includes among its variants, of course, the poetic *tenso* so well represented in Occitan. In the direct orbit of the fabliaux, there is the poem traditionally known as *Des deus bordeors ribaus* (a series of three short related pieces: *La Gengle*, *La Contregengle*, *La Réponse de l'un des deux ribauds*).¹⁸ Tale XXI of the *Disciplina* ('Exemplum de duobus ioculatoribus') is adapted in both versions of the *Chastoïement* (**A**, vv. 3291–3362; **B**, vv. 2409–34). It tells how a *jongleur*, already established at a king's court, becomes jealous of the hospitable reception given a newly arrived colleague.

¹⁶ *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*, ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico Van den Boogaard, 10 vols (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983–98) (hereafter *NRCF*), VII, 241–53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 241. Cf. also Nykrog, *Les fabliaux*, p. 35.

¹⁸ In urgent need of a new edition; ed. by A. de Montaiglon and G. Raynaud, *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux*, vol. I (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1872), pp. 1–12; vol. II (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1877), pp. 257–63.

The former places the bones from his meat in front of the latter, accusing him of gluttony; the accused retorts that his accuser has behaved like a dog, eating both meat and bones, since none remain from his meal. Although this story is nowhere designated a fabliau, with its *trompeur trompé* theme it blends imperceptibly into the context of the genre and might easily have formed the basis for one of the simpler types. After some admonitions by the father concerning avarice and covetousness, it is followed immediately by the tale of the little bird, well-known outside of the *Disciplina* and its vernacular adaptations from *Le Lai de l'oiselet*, *Les Trois savoirs*, and *Le Donnei des amants*.¹⁹ Whatever the precise relationship between these texts, the redactor of version **A** of the *Chastoïement* clearly recognized, as did the author of *Le Lai de l'oiselet*, the relationship of the peasant's 'virgultus' (*Disciplina* XXII, p. 30, v. 26) or 'vergier' (*Chastoïement*, version **A**, v. 2404) to the *hortus conclusus* of courtly tradition and expands the description considerably, once more breaking down barriers between the courtly and the didactic. The author of *Les Trois savoirs* in the Phillipps manuscript (now Princeton University Library, Taylor Medieval 12) acknowledges his debt to the *Disciplina* by attributing the tale to 'Pieres Aumfurs' (fol. 221^o), and the verbal resemblances between this poem and the version in the *Donnei* suggest direct borrowing in one direction or the other.²⁰ I have also argued that the version in the *Donnei* was adapted directly from the Latin *Disciplina* rather than from the *Chastoïement*, as was that of *Disciplina* V ('De homine et serpente') referred to above in connection with the renaming of the fox in the *Chastoïement*, version **A**.²¹ The tale of the little bird is also, of course, not without its affiliations to the animal fable, and the author of the *Donnei* recognized this. Furthermore, the re-

¹⁹ On the relationship between the various versions of the story, see Lenora D. Wolfgang, *Le lai de l'oiselet: An Old French Poem of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philological Society, 1990), pp. 7–23; on *Les Trois savoirs*, see Wolfgang, 'The *Trois savoirs* in Phillipps Manuscript 25970', in *Continuations: Essays on Medieval French Language and Literature and Language in Honor of John L. Grigsby*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy and Gloria Torrini-Roblin (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1989), pp. 311–22, supplementing Paul Meyer, 'Notice du ms. 25970 de la bibliothèque Phillipps (Cheltenham)', *Romania*, 37 (1908), 209–35, esp. pp. 217–21; on the *Donnei*, ed. by Gaston Paris, 'Le donnei des amants', *Romania*, 25 (1896), 497–541, see Keith Busby, 'The *Donnei des amants* and Courtly Tradition', *Medioevo Romano*, 14 (1989), 181–95.

²⁰ Meyer, 'Notice', p. 218.

²¹ 'The *Donnei des amants*', pp. 190–94; in the *Donnei*, the fox is not named Renart. See also Michel Potelle, 'Le conte de l'oiselet dans *Le Donnei des Amans*', in *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1969), II, 1299–307.

relationship between animal fable and fabliau is underlined by the 'human' version of 'De homine et serpente', namely *Du predome qui rescolt son compere de noier*, a fabliau found in BnF, fr. 19152, which also contains version **B** of the *Chastoielement*.²² In essence, the authors of the *Chastoielement* and the *Donnei* have adapted the Latin originals of *Disciplina* V and XXII, those of *Le Lai de l'oiselet* and *Les Trois savoirs*, XXII alone, exploiting potential points of contact with established vernacular genres such as the fable, the fabliau, and in the case of 'De homine et serpente' in the *Chastoielement*, version **A**, the tradition of *Le Roman de Renart*.

The story of the little bird is followed in all versions of the *Disciplina* and *Chastoielement* by that of the peasant who gave his oxen to the wolf (*Disciplina* XXIII, 'Exemplum de aratore et lupo iudicioque vulpis'). A passing fox offers to resolve the dispute between the peasant and the wolf, manages to acquire two hens for himself and his wife, and to leave the wolf stranded down a well. In the *Disciplina* and in the *Chastoielement*, version **B** ('De un vilein e de .i. lou e de .i. gopil', as per Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86), the characters, human and animal, are anonymous, and the tale resembles nothing more than an Æsopic fable. In the *Chastoielement*, version **A**, however, as in its version of *Disciplina* III, the fox is named Renart; furthermore, the wolf is Ysengrin, and the oxen, Samin and Marcuel. Threatening his oxen, the peasant says: 'Et je vos ai a Ysengris, / Le compere Renart, pramis' (vv. 3589–90). If the author of version **A** clearly expects his audience to be familiar with the *matière de Renart*, the peasant and his oxen also appear to inhabit a world in which the Æsopic fable flirts with that of the beast epic. The story of the fox and the wolf in the well is strictly speaking a fable (in its earliest form, that is, *Disciplina* XXIII), and it also appears as such in Odo of Cheriton, his epigone, John of Sheppey, and Nicholas Bozon.²³ John Flinn has argued with some plausibility that Branch IV of *Le Roman de Renart* drew on the *Disciplina* and that the *Chastoielement*, version **A**, in turn exploited the popularity of the *Roman* when adapting the *Disciplina*, turning it into 'une véritable branche de Renart'.²⁴

²² Text in *NRCF*, VIII, 165–70. See Alexandre Micha, 'À propos d'un fabliau', *Le Moyen Âge*, 35 (1949), 17–20.

²³ All in Hervieux, *Les fabulistes latins*, IV: Odo of Cheriton, XIX, 192–93; John of Sheppey, LIX, 441–42; Nicholas Bozon, X, 261.

²⁴ John Flinn, *Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature française et dans les littératures étrangères au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), pp. 486–88 (p. 487). For Branch IV (Martin's numbering), see *Le roman de Renart édité d'après les manuscrits C et M*, ed. by Naoyuki Fukumoto, Noboru Harano, and Satoru Suzuki (Tokyo: Librairie France-Tosho, 1983), I, 392–409.

The interplay between the Latin *Disciplina* and the Old French verse *Chastoiement*, and between the tales of the *Chastoiement* and various other vernacular narrative genres and individual poems, on both textual and codicological levels, is at the same time an eloquent witness to the Latin roots of vernacular literature and a reminder of the porous boundaries between texts and text-types. Ultimately, it is one of many vindications of the vision of the founders of the International Reynard Society for the Study of the Beast Epic, Fable, and Fabliau, to which Brian Levy has made so many distinguished contributions both on and off the field, as it were.

'IL N'Y A PAS DE SOT MÉTIER': QUOIQU'... PETITE PROMENADE À TRAVERS LES DITS 'PROFESSIONNELS' DE LA LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISE DU MOYEN ÂGE

Alain Corbellari

Les dits des XIII^e et XIV^e siècle restent un corpus délaissé de la littérature française médiévale. Narratifs et franchement comiques, les fabliaux leur ont toujours volé la vedette; il est vrai que, malgré la savante étude de Monique Léonard,¹ on ne sait toujours pas très bien ce que c'est qu'un dit. Comme le disait Bédier, 'tout fabliau est un dit; mais la réciproque n'est pas vraie',² et si des constantes se dégagent tout de même, elles ne sauraient pas aller beaucoup plus loin que de nous informer que le dit est un texte bref en vers non chanté. La question de l'humour, en particulier, est laissée pendante et, en s'inspirant de trop près de la remarque de Bédier, on en viendrait vite à penser qu'un dit, pour ne pas être un fabliau, doit ne pas être drôle. Certes, il est bien des dits à la lecture desquels on s'ennuie à mourir, mais quel genre médiéval peut se vanter de ne pas contenir de scories?

Bien sûr, le corpus est très disparate, et bien des dits ne figurent parmi les 684 numéros de la liste de Monique Léonard que par la fantaisie d'un rubricateur médiéval peu inspiré.³ Il n'est cependant pas impossible d'isoler dans ce magma des groupes de textes plus cohérents que d'autres, et le volume du *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* consacré aux textes brefs témoigne d'un

¹ Monique Léonard, *Le dit et sa technique littéraire des origines à 1340*, Nouvelle bibliothèque du moyen Âge (Paris: Champion, 1996).

² Joseph Bédier, *Les Fabliaux* (Paris: Champion, 1926), p. 31.

³ Ainsi en particulier de *Renart le Contrefait*, dont Monique Léonard (*Le dit et sa technique littéraire*, p. 69) admet qu'il constitue, avec ses 41,150 vers, un cas 'aberrant'.

effort certain dans ce sens.⁴ On y trouve en particulier un chapitre sur la ‘didactique sur des activités pratiques’, réunissant des textes qui, dans l’ensemble, n’ont jusqu’ici qu’assez peu intéressé la critique.

Une fois décomptés les traités de fauconnerie, d’agriculture ou d’économie domestique, le *GRLMA* range dans la même catégorie une série de dits formant visiblement un groupe à part, et que l’on pourrait appeler ‘dits parisiens’: le *Dit des rues de Paris* de Guillot, le *Dit des Crieries de Paris* de Guillaume de la Ville-neuve, deux *Dits des Moutiers de Paris* et un *Dit du Lendit*,⁵ Paris, au tournant des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles, n’est en effet plus seulement la ville de l’Université: c’est celle où se rencontrent tous les ‘arts’, sans distinction de dignité, ville universelle dont la littérature s’emploie à faire désormais le vivant portrait. On peut *mutatis mutandis* considérer cette série de dits comme un proto-Baedeker de la capitale de Philippe le Bel. Mais pour quels touristes? Leur aspect énumératif n’est en fait pas sans créer un certain vertige qui anticipe le pur plaisir accumulatif des listes rabelaisiennes. De même que celles-ci tentent d’exprimer l’ivresse de la conquête d’un monde renouvelé, les dits parisiens des alentours de 1300 se grisent de la profusion que l’on pouvait croire inépuisable d’une métropole alors sans seconde dans la Chrétienté. On n’insistera cependant pas ici sur les ‘dits parisiens’, car on ne retrouve guère dans ces textes la structure encomiastique bien particulière de nos dits ‘professionnels’.

Une autre catégorie de dits ‘liés à des activités pratiques’ ne nous retiendra pas davantage ici, bien que leur drôlerie et leur virtuosité soit patentées: ceux dont on pourrait faire un mini-cycle des ‘colporteurs’, dédié à des personnages dont l’activité se situe à la frontière du commerce et du théâtre, car leur métier est de vendre leur marchandise tout en se vendant eux-mêmes. Le *GRLMA* cite, dans ce registre, *Le Dit des Taboueurs*, dont les héros exercent une activité proche de celle des jongleurs, et *Le Dit de l’Herberie* de Rutebeuf; mais, curieusement, on ne

⁴ *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1970), VI.1, 128–31 (article de Cesare Segre) et VI.2, 181–84.

⁵ À l’exception du *Dit des rues de Paris* et, curieusement, du plus riche des deux *Dits des Moutiers*, tous ces textes ont été édités par Alfred Franklin qui leur a adjoint trois textes de Rutebeuf (*Le Dit de l’Erberie*, *Le Dit des Ordres* et *La Chanson des Ordres*), ainsi qu’une précieuse ‘Nomenclature des rues, places, carrefours, portes, paroisses, croix, palais, etc. de Paris au XIII^e siècle, d’après la Taille de 1292’. Voir *Les Rues et les cris de Paris au XIII^e siècle: Pièces historiques publiées d’après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, éd. par Alfred Franklin (Paris: Willem et Dafis, 1874; rééd.: Paris: Les Éditions de Paris, 1984).

trouve dans sa liste ni *Le Dit du Mercier*⁶ ni *Les Deux Bordeors ribauds*,⁷ qui appartiennent pourtant de plein droit à cette série de textes qui forment la frange du corpus des dits qui flirte le plus évidemment avec la théâtralité.⁸

Neuf dits, en fin de compte, intéressent le sujet que nous aimerions aborder ici dont, jusqu'à tout récemment, huit ne se lisaient que dans de vieilles éditions de Jubinal et le neuvième uniquement dans le *Recueil complet des fabliaux* de Montaiglon et Raynaud.⁹ Et pour être franc, j'avouerai ici que ma curiosité avait tout d'abord été titillée par un recueil négligé de Jubinal, la *Lettre au directeur de l'Artiste touchant le manuscrit de la bibliothèque de Berne n° 354, perdu pendant vingt-huit ans*.¹⁰ Je dis négligé, car, sans doute parce qu'il était trop maigre (on n'ose supposer que le fait que le manuscrit concerné n'était pas à la Bibliothèque Nationale de France y fût pour quelque chose...), ce recueil au titre rocambolesque, et dont l'origine est, nous allons le voir, plus rocambolesque encore n'a, contrairement aux autres compilations de Jubinal, pas été réédité par l'indispensable Slatkine.

L' 'Artiste' en question, on s'en doute, est un journal, à qui Jubinal, en 1838 donc, réserve l'*editio princeps* de cinq dits conservés dans l'illustre manuscrit 354 de la Burgerbibliothek de Berne: l'éditeur, dans ce qui est proprement sa 'lettre' raconte les tribulations du fameux codex: prêté par la ville de Berne à un érudit parisien à la fin de l'Ancien Régime, il disparut dans la tourmente révolutionnaire, avant d'être retrouvé à la Restauration. Mais le gouvernement français

⁶ Éd. par Philippe Ménard dans *Mélanges offerts à Jean Frappier* (Genève: Droz, 1970), II, 797–808.

⁷ Éd. par Edmond Faral dans *Mimes français du XIII^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1910), pp. 81–111.

⁸ On pourrait même adjoindre à ces textes *Le Dit des héraults* de Baudouin de Condé (éd. par S. Panunzio, dans Baudouin de Condé, *Il Mantello d'onore* (Milano: Luini, 1999), pp. 266–301), texte le plus drôle et sans doute le plus réussi de son auteur, et sur lequel on consultera avec profit le bel article de Yasmina Foehr-Jannsens, 'La voix et le vêtement du héraut dans *Le Dit des Héraults* de Baudouin de Condé', dans *Formes de la critique: parodie et satire dans la France et l'Italie médiévales*, études publiées par Jean-Claude Mühlethaler avec la collaboration d'Alain Corbellari et de Barbara Wahlen, *Colloques, congrès et conférences*, 4 (Paris: Champion, 2003), pp. 87–113.

⁹ En fait, la seule édition récente est celle, avec traduction, du *Dit des Fevres* dans le recueil édité par Willem Noomen, *Le Jongleur par lui-même: Choix de dits et de fabliaux* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 67–85.

¹⁰ A. Jubinal, *Lettre au directeur de l'Artiste touchant le manuscrit de la bibliothèque de Berne n° 354, perdu pendant vingt-huit ans* (Paris: Pannier, 1838).

refusa de le restituer gratuitement à la ville de Berne et la pauvre Burgerbibliothek dut racheter à ses frais un manuscrit qui lui appartenait de droit! Entre-temps, Jubinal avait pu y faire son choix: à vrai dire, comme il l'avoue candidement, il n'y a collationné que la table des matières, reproduisant les textes d'après la copie d'un certain Mouchet!¹¹ On regrettera peut-être moins, dans ces circonstances, qu'il ait préféré recopier ces cinq dits obscurs plutôt que *La Folie Tristan* ou le *Perceval* de Chrétien de Troyes, mais son choix était tout de même motivé par une considération sérieuse: ces cinq dits, respectivement *des Changeors*, *des Bochiers*, *des Cordoaniers*, *des Cordiers* et *des Tisseranz* ne se retrouvent en effet dans aucun autre manuscrit français.¹²

À leur lecture, on se défend difficilement de leur trouver un air de famille. Au vu de la signature Jehan qui se lit à la fin du *Dit des Changeurs*, Jubinal attribuait ce dit à Jean de Choisy, sous prétexte que cet auteur avait signé un dit situé à quelques feuillets de distance de celui *des Changeurs* dans le manuscrit. Est-il nécessaire de dire que cette inférence est extrêmement douteuse?¹³ Le fait est que l'on ne serait pas autrement étonné que ces cinq dits 'professionnels' soient de la même main. Ils ne sont cependant pas totalement seuls en leur genre. Le manuscrit de Berne leur adjoint également *Le Dit des Boulangers*, dans une copie extrêmement défectueuse,¹⁴ et dont une version beaucoup plus lisible, signée d'un certain Robin, se trouve dans un manuscrit de la BNF, et nous allons voir que, complétant notre corpus, l'on peut encore adjoindre à ce groupe de trois autres dits, ceux *des Peintres*, *des Fevres* et *des Marchëans*.¹⁵ Celui *des Fevres* est

¹¹ Jubinal, *Lettre au directeur de l'Artiste*, p. 13.

¹² On pourrait certes en dire autant de la *Folie de Berne*, mais Francisque Michel venait de la publier (1837) et Jubinal ne semble jamais avoir beaucoup goûté les textes trop tragiques.

¹³ Monique Léonard, pourtant, l'accepte sans sourciller (*Le dit et sa technique littéraire*, p. 364).

¹⁴ On ne développera pas ici une description détaillée de tous les textes qui entourent nos dits 'professionnels' dans le manuscrit de Berne, mais on fera tout de même remarquer que le premier, *Le Dit des Changeurs*, est copié à la suite directe de *La Bataille d'Enfer et de Paradis*, démarcage allégorico-drôlatique de la bataille de Bouvines où sont citées les principales villes de France, fait dont nous ne savons à vrai dire pas s'il y a quelque chose à en tirer.

¹⁵ *Le Dit des Fevres*, éd. par Achille Jubinal, dans *Jongleurs et trouvères* (Paris: Merklein, 1835; rééd. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1977), pp. 128–37; *Le Dit des Boulangers*, ibid., pp. 138–42; *Le Dit des Peintres*, éd. par A. Jubinal dans son *Nouveau recueil de contes, dits et fabliaux* (Paris: Pannier, 1842; rééd., Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1975), pp. 96–101; *Le Dit des Marchands*, éd. par Gaston Raynaud et Anatole de Montaiglon dans *Recueil général et complet des Fabliaux* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1872–90), II (1877), 123–29.

également signé Robin, tandis que celui *des Marchands* mentionne comme auteur un certain Phelippot. Il semble, donc, que l'on doive abandonner l'hypothèse de l'auteur commun, mais l'idée que nos neuf dits émaneraient d'un même 'atelier' reste vraisemblable. Sans trop insister sur cette supposition invérifiable, nous ferons néanmoins comme si elle était vraie, car il faut avouer que l'idée qu'une seule volonté aurait présidé à l'élaboration de ce petit corpus est bien séduisante.

Ces neuf textes sont, donc, en tous points comparables; ils nous posent les mêmes questions et sont construits de la même manière: un éloge dithyrambique d'un corps de métier peut-être commanditaire du poème.¹⁶ Ils semblent former une manière de commentaire à l'abondante littérature consacrée aux 'états du monde'.¹⁷ Ce faisant, ils témoignent d'une conscience très nette de la valeur des arts 'mécaniques' à la fin du XIII^e siècle. Rappelons en effet que l'on constate, entre 1200 et 1300, une progressive valorisation de ces arts parallèles à ceux du *trivium* et du *quadrivium*, mouvement allant de leur déni complet à leur intégration au système des sciences, en passant, étape décisive, par leur description dans le *Speculum naturale* de Vincent de Beauvais.¹⁸

Mais s'ils n'étaient que cela, ces dits ne nous intéresseraient que médiocrement, et il faut bien avouer que, pris au premier degré, ils peuvent apparaître bien plats. Tout change cependant dès que l'on entreprend de les mettre en parallèle: l'effet qui en résulte n'est alors pas sans évoquer le *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* de Flaubert, car on comprend assez vite que l'usage immodéré de l'hyperbole y fait que les éloges finissent par s'annuler réciproquement, et que,

¹⁶ C'était déjà l'hypothèse d'Edmond Faral dans *Les Jongleurs en France au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1910), p. 214: 'les Dits de métiers, panégyriques à demi-sérieux qui se prononçaient avec profit devant les artisans dont ils flattaient la vanité.'

¹⁷ Remarquera-t-on, pour confirmer une remarque presque incidente de Claude Lévi-Strauss (*La Potière jalouse* (Paris: Plon, 1985), p. 17), que le potier est absent de cette liste, comme il est généralement absent des dictons et autres anecdotes de métiers d'Europe? Ce fait est peut-être à mettre en parallèle avec l'intervention, dans *Le Jeu de la Feuillée* d'Adam de la Halle, du potier qui se plaint que son fils, le fou, lui a brisé sa marchandise (in Adam de la Halle, *Œuvres complètes*, éd. par Pierre-Yves Badel, Lettres Gothiques (Paris: Livre de poche, 1995), v. 534); le lien métaphorique traditionnel entre pot brisé et folie est en effet particulièrement évident ici et peut-être faut-il comprendre que cette association inquiétante a détourné les auteurs d'intégrer le potier à la liste des métiers 'innocents' des anciens artisans. . . . Sur le symbolisme du métier de potier à la fin du Moyen Âge, voir Denis Huë, 'Le chant du potier: le clerc et l'artisan', dans *Le Clerc au Moyen Âge = Senefiance*, 37 (1995), 295-315.

¹⁸ Voir Jean-Paul Allard et Serge Lusignan, *Les Arts mécaniques au Moyen Âge* (Montréal: Bellarmin; Paris: Vrin, 1982).

plutôt que d'ordonner la société, à la manière du *Livre des manières* d'Etienne de Fougères, ces dits organisent une joyeuse farandole des professions où l'éminente qualité accordée à chacun aboutit assez vite à nous faire douter de la rationalité de ce petit monde qu'est l'univers corporatif médiéval.

Allons y voir de plus près, et commençons par *Le Dit des Cordonniers* qui débute en égrenant des considérations exemplaires de l'esprit de ces textes:

Cez qui font les meillors mestiers
Doit en amer et tenir chiers.
Li un font .i. et li autre el,
Mais je voi maint mesnestrier
Q'an sol lou[e] cordoanier,
Car bien savez — n'est mie gas! —
Il n'est nus hom ne haut ne bas,
Tant soit ne eschars ne avers,
Qui ne li coveigne solers,
S'il n'est de tel relegion,
O hermites o sainz hom,
Qui por Deu voille aler nuz piez;
Que ja nus hom, si n'est chauciez,
Ne sanbleroit gaires valoir
Se il avoit a son voloir
Robe d'ecarlare o de soie;
S'il iert nuz piez enmi la voie,
Ne seroit il ne biax ne gent,
Ne gaires prisiez de la jant. (vv. 7–25)¹⁹

Les 98 vers restants n'ajoutent rien d'essentiel à ce panégyrique; nous sommes toujours ramenés à cet axiome: la seule chose dont on a vraiment besoin pour vivre ce sont des souliers! Conséquemment, cette affirmation s'accompagne d'une dévalorisation des autres métiers, et en particulier de ceux liés à la confection des vêtements (voir vv. 21–22). Or, *Le Dit des Cordonniers* est suivi, dans le manuscrit de Berne, par un *Dit des Tisserands* qui, comme son nom l'indique, fait l'éloge des fabricants de vêtements, et où l'on trouve, comme de juste, quelques piques méprisantes contre les faiseurs de chaussures:

Si sai a esciant:
N'a si boen marchëant,
De ci jusques a Troies,

¹⁹ Nous citons ici notre nouvelle édition des cinq dits du manuscrit de Berne: Alain Corbellari, *La Voix des clercs: Littérature et savoir universitaire autour des dits du XIII^e siècle* (Genève: Droz, 2005), pp. 274–92.

S'i ne voit samedi
 Ou marchié, ce vos di,
 O enmi cele voie,
 Nuz piez o san soler
 Et fust mal conreez,
 Si barguignast avoir,
 Ke ja home trovast
 Qui biau li apelast.
 Don le poez savoir
 Et soiez bien certain:
 N'a si mauvais vilain,
 De si enduresté,
 Se il avoit biax dras,
 Chascuns ne l'apelast
 Et diroit: 'achetez!' (vv. 52–69)

Mais les tisserands sont eux-mêmes supplantés par les forgerons dans *Le Dit des Fevres*, car ceux-ci, en confectionnant les ciseaux, s'avèrent les seuls à même de donner forme aux vêtements:

Ne prise pas l'omme .i. festu,
 Nul homme nu, sanz vestiment,
 Ja ne sera ne bel ne gent;
 Robe fete n'appareillie,
 S'ele n'est aus force taillie. (vv. 200–04²⁰)

C'est le cas de demander: de qui se moque-t-on?²¹

Au demeurant, l'originalité des images et des arguments n'est pas la principale qualité de nos textes, et l'auteur (les auteurs?) utilise(nt) volontiers une technique que l'on appellerait aujourd'hui du copier-coller. Ainsi lit-on dans *Le Dit des Changeurs*:

Par changeors vont pelerins
 Et par veages et par chemins
 A Saint Jasque et Outremer;
 Por ce si les doivent amer (vv. 42–45)

et dans celui *des Cordonniers*:

²⁰ Faute d'avoir consulté le manuscrit, nous faisons confiance ici à l'édition de Jubinal que nous adaptons néanmoins aux conventions graphiques des médiévistes d'aujourd'hui.

²¹ On pense irrésistiblement aux fameuses définitions de Flaubert dans *Le Dictionnaire des idées reçues*: 'BLONDES Plus chaudes que les brunes (voyez *brunes*). [. . .] BRUNES Plus chaudes que les blondes (voyez *blondes*)'.

Ne puet aler sanz chaucemante,
 Aler en plain ne en bochage
 Ou en lointain pelerinage,
 A Saint Jasquë o Otremer. (vv. 34–37)

Tandis que d'autres formulations récurrentes se lisent dans *Le Dit des Cordonniers*:

Chascun jor a en d'ax besoin
 Et dus et princes, roi et conte (vv. 113–14)

dans celui *des Cordiers*:

Li mestiers est plaisanz et bons,
 Que il n'est hom ne rois ne cuens,
 Que de la corde n'ait mestier, (vv. 82–84)

dans celui *des Peintres*:

Qu'il n'est ne roy, ne duc, ne conte,
 S'il veut aus paintres guerrier,
 Qu'il ne leur viegne honte. (vv. 2–4)

et dans celui *des Tisserands*:

Soz ciel n'a roi ne conte,
 Ne nul si haut seignor
 Qui do drap n'ait enor, (vv. 104–06)

Certes, le pèlerinage est une réalité essentielle de la vie médiévale, non moins que les hiérarchies féodales, et l'on pourrait simplement parler de topoï, mais l'effet est ici à la fois plus simple et plus efficace: si les mêmes exemples et formules reviennent, c'est précisément parce que, dans le court espace textuel laissé au panégyrique de chaque métier, c'est bien l'ensemble de la société qui se reflète, comme si le métier en question suffisait à lui seul à englober une description exhaustive du monde.

Cette volonté est particulièrement sensible dans *Le Dit des Cordiers*, qui décrit un si grand nombre d'usages des cordes, que l'on ne peut qu'être frappé par le disparate, voire par le 'mauvais goût' de certaines de ces mentions. Ainsi du début du poème:

En doit amer et tenir chier
 Les cordiers qui les cordes font.
 En ne porroit do puis parfont
 L'eve, s'il n'estoient, fors traire.
 Cordier sont molt de haut parage,
 Cortois et saje et bien apris,
 Car s'un lerres estoit ja pris,
 Se cordier consoil [n']i metoit,

Je croi a poine panderoit,
Ne jamais molin ne morroit
Se cordier cordes ne faisoit.
Par quoi l'autre mule s'acorde. (vv. 6–17)

Bien sûr, le Moyen Âge ne ressentait pas toujours le dégoût horrifié que nous éprouvons aujourd'hui devant le spectacle de la pendaison, laquelle, face à des formes encore plus brutales de mise à mort, pouvait à bon droit passer pour une des plus civilisées. Et c'est sans doute bien ainsi qu'il faut lire l'allusion qu'y fait notre dit (quoique avec le probable grain de sel de l'humour noir): dans un monde dont les cordiers sont les rois, la pendaison est une des activités les plus honorables qui soient! On ne s'étonne pas, dans la même logique, de voir que les cordiers sont les maîtres de la guerre:

Ja nus chastiax ne seroit pris
Haut, ne grant pierre batue,
S'a perriere n'est confondue
Car perriere ne mangoniax,
Ne trabuchez ne tanberiax
Jamais nul jor ne giteroit
Se cordier corde n'i faisoit ;
Et sachiez cil qui dedanz sont,
Qui les deffanses i refont
Des serjanz et des chevaliers,
De fondeors, d'aubalestiers,
Ne puent giter ne rien faire,
Car san corde ne puent traire. (vv. 91–103)

Comme ils étaient les auxiliaires indispensables des activités liées à la chasse et à la pêche:

Molt a a amer an cordier,
Car il font roiz a engignier
Pors et cers et bestes sauvages,
Et cordes a lier les vaches.
Pechëor d'evë et de mer
Doivent bien les cordes amer,
Car san corde ne puis vëoir
Commant lor roiz puissant avoir,
Qant dedanz l'eve li sont mises:
Mestier lor ont en maintes g[u]ises. (vv. 58–67)

Il n'est cependant sans doute pas indifférent que le dit se termine par l'allusion (plus noble) aux activités guerrières! Mais une telle construction n'est pas aussi évidente dans tous nos dits; bien qu'il soit le plus court (il ne fait que 55 vers)

celui *des Changeurs* semble aussi le plus désordonné: le thème du pèlerinage y revient à deux reprises et l'auteur ne semble pas parvenir à dépasser l'idée que les changeurs sont particulièrement utiles à ceux qui voyagent;²² il est ainsi possible que l'on doive considérer ce texte comme une tentative plutôt ratée de contenter une corporation qui n'inspirait guère le conteur. À moins que l'on y voie un exercice limite: celui consistant à mimer, précisément, par un savant sur-place textuel, le fait qu'à voyager dans tous les sens on ne saurait jamais, et immanquablement, que revenir chez soi!

Par ailleurs, de même que les dits *des Cordonniers* et *des Tisserands* ne pouvaient se lire l'un sans l'autre, *Le Dit des Changeurs* fait la paire avec *Le Dit des Marchands*. Le premier subordonne la vente aux contraintes économiques:

Marchëanz qui vont foire querre
Par tote les estranges terres
Ne porroient sanz changeor. (vv. 33–35)

Le second met au contraire en avant l'activité pérégrine:

Je di c'on doit les marchëanz
Deseur toute genz honorer,
Quar il vont par terre et par mer
Et en maint eestrangle païs
Por querre laine et vair et gris. (vv. 12–16)

Ce dernier vers donne d'ailleurs le ton au poème, car le reste du texte consistera essentiellement en une énumération de marchandises où les articles de luxe tiendront la part du lion. Le dit se termine par une prière pour que les marchands 'en paradis puissent aler' (v. 146) et qu'ils soient gardés 'de la tormente de mer' (v. 157), ce qui nous maintient dans la thématique du voyage, mais également pour que Dieu 'les deffende du dé' (v. 159), ce qui amène une comparaison inattendue du marchand avec le jongleur:

Encor ne sui pas enrobez,
Quar par le dé sui desrobez;
Se Dieu plest, je m'enroberai
Et aus marchëanz conterai
Des diz noviaus si liement
Qu'il me donront de lor argent. (vv. 161–66)

²² Signalons aussi la répétition des vers 19–20 ('S'il n'a des deniers de la terre, / Au chanjëor va consoil querre') dans les vers 21–22 ('Tant que veigne en estrange terre, / S'au chanjëor walt consoil querre'), répétition qui semblait tellement suspecte à Jubinal qu'il a purement et simplement omis les vers 21–22 dans son édition.

À travers des jeux de mots et de sens qui ne sont pas sans rappeler Rutebeuf, c'est bien une manière de coup de pied de l'âne que l'auteur envoie aux marchands: ceux-ci ne sont dans le fond rien d'autre que des bateleurs!

Mais le grand procédé de nos dits reste celui de l'énumération, dont nos diseurs tirent des procédés fort *divertissants*, dans les deux sens du terme! Il n'est en effet souvent pas très difficile de dénicher, au sein des professions décrites, un type d'action ou un objet qui permet de rebondir sur l'évocation d'activités *a priori* sans lien avec le métier de départ. Ainsi *Le Dit des Bouchers* renchérit-il sur l'expression proverbiale qui veut que 'dans le cochon tout est bon' en précisant que le mouton n'est pas moins apte que le porc à la récupération tous azimuts. On passe ainsi de la boucherie à la mendicité, en passant par la médecine, l'agro-alimentaire, les métiers intellectuels et la pègre:

Au moton voldrai repairier,
 Car lo depiecent et detaillent
 Chauciez qui mialz en a san faille,
 Qui faire en fait grasse poree,
 Don mainte amosne an est donee:
 Et li bochiers meïsmemant
 Done de sa char molt sovant
 Por Deu as povres acochiees
 Et as morsiax entortoilliees
 Et as povres mesaaisiez,
 O cuident qui soit enploiez.
 Li motons est et bons et chiers,
 Que il n'i a teste ne piez,
 Pance et boiax et pormont,
 Fresure, rate et roïgnon
 Qui molt bon a mangier ne soit
 Et don en puet fairë exploit.
 Et sachiez qant la char est cuite,
 Ele n'est pas soe quite,
 Einz lo covient partot doner
 Et a l'estel et a l'ostel,
 As povres clers et as ribauz,
 As paillars et as truendiax.
 Qui i verroit vieilles aler
 Por l'eve graise demander,
 Dient qu'ele muerent de fain,
 Qu'ele volent moillier lor pain. (vv. 107–33)

On aura en particulier noté l'allusion aux quatre catégories de personnages cités aux vers 128–29, en une énumération qui sent sa grande ville, et en particulier,

sans doute, Paris, s'il est vrai que les 'ribauds', depuis Rutebeuf et Jean de Meun,²³ ne sauraient être que ceux de la Place de Grève... Et de fait, qui ne serait séduit par l'idée que nos dits 'professionnels', dans le grouillement d'activités qu'ils font chacun rayonner autour d'un centre choisi, s'appliquent particulièrement bien à la nouvelle Babylone qu'est le Paris du XIII^e siècle?

Le Dit des Boulangers use d'une stratégie argumentative particulièrement retorse, puisqu'il est presque autant un dit *contre* les orfèvres qu'un dit *pour* les boulangers. On peut lire cette opposition dans un sens religieux: l'orfèvre, artisan du luxe, qui thésaurise les richesses matérielles est évidemment l'antithèse du boulanger qui prépare le pain de l'eucharistie; mais dans la logique qui est celle de nos dits, c'est sans doute la lecture ironique qui l'emporte: je vous ai promis de vous parler des boulangers, semble dire le narrateur, mais auparavant, vous accepterez bien un petit excursus sur une profession qui n'a rien à voir avec celle-là. Dès le vers 13, en effet, et pour quinze vers, il abandonne le thème initial:

Quar, foi que je doi mon baulevre,
 Je ne pris pass oeuvre d'orfevre
 .I. bouton rouge d'aiglentier.
 Quel bien vient-il de lor mestier,
 De lor granz coupes noieles
 D'or et d'argent longues et lees,
 De lor aniaus, de lor afiches?
 Orfevre sont avers et chiches,
 Quar quant il fet ne crois ne chasse,
 Les escroes toute amasse,
 Au chief de l'uevre les refont.
 Ce sont les biens c'orfevre font,
 Quar quant ce vient a l'enforner,
 Ja n'i verrez povres torner,
 Por querre paste ne farine. (vv. 13–27)

La pirouette finale permet de revenir au thème de départ. Mais la pièce continuera selon la technique vagabonde que nous commençons à connaître, le boulanger amenant l'évocation du meunier, celle de la farine permettant une allusion aux aumônes destinées aux pauvres, un passage sur les gâteaux conduisant 'tout naturellement' à parler des enfants en bas âge, pour conclure sur une forte affirmation:

²³ Voir Rutebeuf, *Dit des ribauds de Grève*, et Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, éd. par Félix Lecoy, 3 vols, Classiques Français du Moyen Âge, 92, 95, 98 (Paris: Champion, 1965–70), I (1965), vv. 5048–62.

Je vous di bien sanz mesprison
Que boulangiers soustient le mont. (vv. 95-96)

Le Dit des Fevres est le plus étendu de tous, avec ses 270 vers,²⁴ mais on peut constater qu'il est celui qui comprend de loin le plus long prologue: le plus grand luxe de détails qu'il comporte par ailleurs viendrait-il du fait qu'il aurait été destiné à être le premier de la collection? L'inférence est bien sûr invérifiable, mais elle reste tentante, car dans les 21 vers du prologue l'auteur justifie son entreprise par le désir de renouveler les vieux thèmes chevaleresques:

Li .i. de la table roonde
Vous acontent romanz et contes;
Les uns font rois, les autres contes
[. . .]
Mes puisque j'en ai leus et tens
Veuil des fevres selonc mon sens
.I. conte commencer et dire
Dont bien est vraie la matire,
A tesmoing trestout cels du mont. (vv. 14-16 et 21-25)

Le jeu de mot *contes / contes* n'est pas moins intéressant que la présence dans le même vers de ces rois et de ces contes dont on avait déjà vu l'alliance topiques dans d'autres dits 'professionnels'. Mais le point essentiel reste cette revendication de vérité, elle-même topique, appuyée sur un argument beaucoup moins habituel, à savoir celui, tout simplement du spectacle de la société. 'Je ne veulx point fouiller au seing de la nature', dira Du Bellay;²⁵ identiquement, notre satiriste médiéval ne se pique que de déployer le réel tel que chacun peut l'observer de son regard le moins prévenu.

J'ai gardé pour la bonne bouche *Le Dit des Peintres*; il est un peu différent des autres, car il est écrit dans une forme strophique, qui plus est assez inhabituelle puisque après quatre vers de prologue, il est rimé aabaabacac (ou aabaabcdcd, dès la strophe 5), et fait alterner octosyllabes et (les vers 3, 6, 8 et 10) hexasyllabes. Par ailleurs, son propos se veut à la fois rassembleur et symbolique. Les peintres, en effet, ne sont pas à mettre sur le même plan que les autres corps de métier, car

²⁴ *Le Dit des Marchands* fait 168 vers, celui *des Bouchers* 150, celui *des Peintres* 144, celui *des Cordonniers* 123, celui *des Tisserands* 122, celui *des Cordiers* 111, celui *des Boulangers* 110, celui *des Changeurs* 55 seulement.

²⁵ Joachim Du Bellay, *Les Regrets*. Voir *Œuvres françoises de Joachim Du Bellay [. . .] avec une notice biographique et des notes*, éd. par Ch. Marty-Laveaux, 2 vols (Paris: Lemerre, 1866-67), sonnet 1, vers 1.

ils servent à rehausser toutes les autres activités. Tout cela est cependant dit de manière bien obscure, car chaque strophe conclut une énumération de professions qui ne peuvent se passer d'user de la peinture par une pointe sur la valeur négative de l'acte de peindre, pris dans un sens apparemment métaphorique. Témoin la strophe 2:

Il n'est orfèvres ne lormiers,
Esmailleurs, broudeurs ne seliers,
Cilz qui argent espure,
Armuriers, gueniers, chapeliers,
Les rostiers et les tabletiers,
Metent en peindre cure.
Je croi qu'il ne soit nul mestiers
Ou ne convigne peindre
Sur tous sont mestres les mestiers
De leur parole faindre. (vv. 15–24)

Si la strophe 6 se termine par le vers 'Peinture doit moult plaire' (v. 64), la strophe 9 est d'une violence toute particulière, affirmant que 'Celi qui miex paint son mestier / Scet plus de tricherie' (vv. 93–94). Et la fin du dit tourne au réquisitoire moral par le biais de l'allégorie, mais en semblant faire une distinction entre bons et mauvais peintres:

Mes trop fort me deshaite
Un faus peintre qu'est losengier
Souvent par flaterie:
Il ressamble a l'ymagier
Qui peint busche porrie. (vv. 130–34)

Jubinal signale dans une note en fin de volume, mais sans autre explication, que *Le Dit des Peintres* est en quelque sorte complété, dans le manuscrit qui l'abrite, par 44 vers qui complètent étonnamment la série de dits que nous avons rapidement parcourus ici:²⁶ le diseur explique qu'il voudrait 'dire comment [les métiers] / Furent trouvez premierement' (vv. 15–16); suit une esquisse d'anthropologie où les métiers sont dits dérivés de l'observation d'animaux: les hirondelles bâtissant leur nid ont donné des idées aux maçons, les sabots des ongulés ont inspiré les cordonniers et les limaces laissant partout des traces de bave sont les ancêtres des enlumineurs! Jubinal a sans doute raison de trouver cette dernière notation 'passablement grotesque', mais il ne semble pas soupçonner que c'est précisément

²⁶ Jubinal, *Nouveau recueil*, II, 424–25.

elle qui nous donne la clé de lecture de l'ensemble des dits 'professionnels':²⁷ le comble du grotesque, en l'occurrence, serait de prendre au sérieux toutes ces descriptions de métiers! Et *Le Dit des Peintres* n'apparaît en fin de compte que comme un cas limite du 'genre'. S'il peut être revendiqué par toutes les professions, et s'il peut de surcroît toujours être détourné pour acquérir un sens métaphorique, c'est que le métier de peintre n'existe pas vraiment et qu'il est en fait la mise en abîme de l'activité, passablement immorale si l'on y réfléchit bien (mais la condamnation n'est ici rien de plus que l'alibi d'un auteur aussi malin que prudent), du jongleur qui, par la grâce du verbe, renvoie dos-à-dos toutes les pratiques sociales qui participent à la bonne marche de la société pour en tirer non du sens, mais un joyeux brouhaha où nul ne saurait plus se reconnaître. Refusant à la fois la fiction narrative du fabliau (qui marque trop la distance) et le sérieux papal de l'exposé didactique (qui abolit tout recul), le dit se révèle, dans le cas de nos poèmes 'professionnels', la forme idéale d'une littérature comique à la fois parodique et démystifiante qui tourne le réel en bourrique tout en se donnant les gants d'en mimer la plate description. Au risque, il est vrai, d'écarter les marges de la littérature.

²⁷ Rappelons qu'en dépit du fait qu'il a publié tous ces dits, Jubinal ne semble guère sensible à l'unité qu'ils forment, car il ne relie les 44 vers isolés du manuscrit 1132 qu'au seul *Dit des Peintres*.

NOS RIONS DE VOSTRE BIEN: THE COMIC POTENTIAL OF PIOUS TALES

Adrian P. Tudor

It is no longer controversial to acknowledge the close links between comic, moralizing, didactic, and pious texts in Old French. However, modern scholarship still has a natural tendency to classify and categorize. Brian J. Levy sought to break down some of these barriers and played an important part in the acceptance of a grey area of vernacular short narratives. Texts which scholars of a different era might easily have compartmentalized — ‘comic fabliaux’, ‘pious tales’, ‘moralizing *dits*’, ‘didactic fables’ — now inhabit the same academic space, just as, at one time, they may have shared pages in the same manuscript. Over a hundred years ago, Albert Lecoy de la Marche addressed the ‘unseemly’ humour of comic exempla in the passionate final paragraph to the preface of his translation:

La légèreté [. . .] n’est qu’apparente. Sous les plaisanteries se cachent souvent les fortes pensées; dans les distractions favorites d’un peuple se trahit son esprit tout entier. Or, je défie tout homme impartial, je défie même tout adversaire des idées du Moyen Age, qui aura la patience de lire attentivement ces amusants écrits, de ne pas éprouver à tout le moins, en face de la haute moralité qui s’en dégage, un mélange indéfinissable d’étonnement et de respect: l’étonnement du philosophe moderne devant l’exhumation d’un monde qu’il ne comprend pas; le respect de l’esprit fort qui se découvre en entrant dans une cathédrale.¹

¹ Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *L’Esprit de nos aïeux: anecdotes et bons mots tirés des manuscrits du XII^e siècle* (Paris: Marpon – Flammarion, 1888), p. 17. Volumes such as Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L’Humour en chair: le rire dans l’église médiévale*, Histoire et Société, 28 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994), and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Prêcher d’exemples: Récits de prédicateurs du Moyen Age* (Paris: Stock/Moyen Age, 1985), have illustrated how humour was far from absent from the medieval pulpit. (Lecoy de la Marche’s work has been updated and

This was a volume Brian encouraged me to read at a very early stage in my academic career. Of course, he went rather further in his own research, building in the later years of his life on the provocative question posed by Jacques Ribard in 1989 — ‘Et si les fabliaux n’étaient pas des “contes à rire”?’² — and insisting upon both the serious elements of the comic and the comic elements of the serious.³ This line of thought can be most convincing. Celebrated texts such as *Del Tumbeor Nostre Dame*, and *L’Ermite et le jongleur* have for some time been considered both didactic and comic,⁴ whilst a number of seemingly serious fabliaux, *Le Chevalier au barisel*, and even some of Gautier de Coinci’s *Miracles de Nostre Dame* lend themselves to a lively, perhaps tongue in cheek telling.⁵ Some parts of the Old French *Vie des Pères*, a collection of, at first sight, deadly sober, pious tales, also occupies this grey area of narratives.⁶ It was Brian’s belief

reprinted as Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *Le Rire du prédicateur*, ed. by Jacques Berlioz, *Miroir du Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).)

² Jacques Ribard, ‘Et si les fabliaux n’étaient pas des “contes à rire”?’, *Reinardus*, 2 (1989), 134–46.

³ I am thinking in particular of “Or escoutez une merveille!” Parallel Paths: Gautier’s *Miracles* and the *Fabliaux*’, to appear in *Gautier de Coinci, Les Miracles de Nostre Dame: Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. by Kathy M. Krause and Alison Stones, *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe*, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming); and ‘Performing Fabliaux’, in *Performing Medieval Narrative*, ed. by Marylin Lawrence, Nancy Regalado, and Evelyn Birge Vitz (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), pp. 123–40; and of two earlier articles: ‘Le fabliau et l’exemple: étude sur les recueils moralisants anglo-normands’, in *Épopée animale, fable, fabliau: Actes du IV^e Colloque de la Société Internationale Renardienne, Evreux, 7–11 septembre 1981*, ed. by Gabriel Bianciotto and Michel Salvat, *Publications de l’Université de Rouen*, 83 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), pp. 311–21; and ‘L’ironie du métier, ou le récit chiasmique: A propos du conte pieux de l’Ermite et du jongleur’, *Reinardus*, 5 (1992), 85–107.

⁴ *Del Tumbeor Nostre Dame*, ed. and trans. by Pierre Kunstmann in *Vierge et merveille: les miracles de Notre Dame narratifs au Moyen Âge*, Collection 10/18, 1424, Bibliothèque Médiévale (Paris: Union Générale d’Éditions, 1981), pp. 142–78; Louis Karl, ‘La légende de l’ermite et le jongleur’, *Revue des Langues Romanes*, 63 (1925), 110–41.

⁵ *Le Chevalier au barisel*, ed. by Félix Lecoy, *Classiques Français du Moyen Âge*, 82 (Paris: Champion, 1955).

⁶ For Michel Zink, the *Vie des Pères* is a deeply pious work of sincere faith and sublime poetry. He sees no reason to believe that the text was in any way influenced by comic short narratives. I must endorse his view, in that the fabliaux blossomed after the composition of our text. However, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the comic stories were circulating at an earlier time. And the two traditions became closely related in some ways at a slightly later date (copied in the same manuscripts, sharing the same *titulus*, *Vie des Pères* tales copied under fablialesque *tituli*, etc.). See Michel Zink, *Poésie et conversion au Moyen Âge*, Perspectives

that divides are mostly modern and artificial (if not arbitrary) and may have surprised the medieval author and audience.⁷

In the light of this acceptance of a grey area — regarding both the modern classification and the medieval authorial intention/reception — I propose to consider here the *Vie des Pères*, still a relatively little known medieval text, but one which was widely copied. This collection of over forty pious tales dates from the first third of the thirteenth century. The primitive group was twice added to — the second and third *Vies des Pères* — giving a total of over seventy tales and miracles, measuring some 30,000 lines. We are dealing with a text of extraordinary quality — according to Michel Zink, one which can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Chrétien de Troyes's romances and with the *Chanson de Roland*;⁸ in Claudio Galderisi's eyes our tales 'ne sont pas sans rivaliser avec quelques-uns parmi les plus beaux passages [de la *Divine Comédie*]'⁹ — and one which enjoyed widespread popularity in the Middle Ages (over fifty manuscript witnesses survive). However, the *Vie des Pères* fell by the wayside as the medieval literary canon was formalized by modern scholarship. This can largely be explained by the lack of a complete edition and the text's complicated manuscript tradition. This has changed somewhat since the publication of Félix Lecoy's edition in the 1990s, and this newfound interest often considers the tales in conjunction with other short narratives (fabliaux, miracles, fables) rather than alongside purely pious texts.¹⁰ Quite soon after its composition the *Vie des Pères* seems to have been used to offer an alternative to the comic fabliaux (although not always as

Littéraires (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), and Keith Busby, *Codex and Context. Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols, Faux Titre, 221–22 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 195–211.

⁷ Cf. for example: Paul Wackers, 'There Are No Genres: Remarks on the Classification of Literary Texts', *Reinardus*, 13 (2000), 237–48; Adrian P. Tudor, 'Les fabliaux: encore la question de typologie', *Studi Francesi*, 47 (2003), 599–603.

⁸ 'Voici une œuvre [. . .] dont la profondeur, la densité, l'audace parfois, l'habileté stylistique, la force poétique sont proprement stupéfiantes et devraient valoir à son auteur une place au voisinage de celle qu'occupent pour nous celui de la *Chanson de Roland* ou Chrétien de Troyes.' Michel Zink, Preface to Adrian P. Tudor, *Tales of Vice and Virtue: The First Old French Vie des Pères*, Faux Titre, 253 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005).

⁹ Claudio Galderisi, *Diegesis: Etudes sur la poétique des motifs narratifs au Moyen Age (de la Vie des Pères aux lettres modernes)*, Cultures et Société Médiévales (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), cover note.

¹⁰ *La Vie des Pères*, ed. by Félix Lecoy, 3 vols (Paris: S.A.T.F., 1993–99). All references are to this edition.

easily as may have been wished, if Keith Busby is right — with regard to *tituli* and illustrations — that in manuscript they required a ‘sugaring of the pill’.¹¹ The individual, often lively narratives are enclosed between sermonizing prologues and epilogues of varying length. The short titles commonly used to refer to the tales were chosen by Gaston Paris in 1884; the numbers correspond to the order of the tales in the best known manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 1546 (A):¹²

1 Fornication imitée	2 Juitel	3 Sarrasine
4 Renieur	5 Copeaux	6 Thaïs
7 Miserere	8 Jardinier	9 Haleine
10 Fou	11 Impératrice	12 Meurtrier
13 Sacristine	14 Ave Maria	15 Queue
16 Crapaud	17 Image de Pierre	18 Baril
19 Abbessse grosse	20 Noël	21 Vision d'enfer
22 Malaquin	23 Vision de diables	24 Ermite accusé
25 Brûlure	26 Crucifix	27 Païen
28 Goliard	(29 Gueule du diable)	30 Colombe
31 Sénéchal	32 Prévôt d'Aquilée	33 Saint Paulin
34 Nièce	35 Ivresse	36 Rachat
37 Usurier	38 Feuille de chou	39 Demi-ami
40 Inceste	41 Image du diable	42 Merlot

As far as humour is concerned, we are dealing less in these pious tales with comic content per se than with comic potential. There is a clear potential for lively and engaging performance, and a number of narrative sections seem to depend entirely on the voice of the reader/performer to confer upon them the right tone.¹³ None of this should be too surprising if we were to consider the plots of these tales at their most basic level, as elaborately padded-out exempla (although such a description would be misleading). Rather than consider the theoretical framework underpinning the notions of laughter and comedy, and fully accepting the conjectural nature of the exercise, I intend to treat the narratives very much (to use Brian's term) at ‘plot level’ and consider what such a reading

¹¹ Busby, *Codex and Context*, p. 201.

¹² Gaston Paris, initialled note to Eduard Schwan's still useful article, ‘La Vie des Anciens Pères’, *Romania*, 13 (1884), 233–63. Neither this manuscript nor Lecoy's base manuscript, f, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 24301, contains the tales in their original order.

¹³ I am taking here Evelyn Birge Vitz's definition of performance as outlined in ‘La lecture érotique au Moyen Age et la performance du roman’, *Poétique*, 137 (2004), 35–51: ‘ayant à faire à toutes les manières par lesquelles une œuvre verbale peut être actualisée ou réalisée’.

might bring to the table of literary scholarship.¹⁴ Brian always taught his pupils to read the text and not concern themselves initially with sources and analogues: what counts most, at least upon our first encounter with a narrative text, is the text itself. Before (or even after) fully applying the tools and techniques of modern philological enquiry, it can be very useful simply to read the texts, follow the intricacies of the plots, listen to the sermons, laugh at the jokes. Derek Brewer urged just this at the end of the first paragraph to his preface to a collection of *Medieval Comic Tales*:

At this point the wise reader, in search of no more than relaxation and life-enhancing enjoyment, will abandon this Preface and Introduction and go straight to the texts. Afterwards there can be a return for fruitful critical activity.¹⁵

Before abandoning my own introductory words, I must briefly mention the general (and troublesome) issue of medieval laughter.

Medieval Laughter

It is at this point that the obvious question must be addressed: how can we tell what made people laugh in the Middle Ages? Myriad misunderstandings and prejudices arise in the modern world, so it is only proper to be careful when dealing with a more distant culture. It is true that we will never fully understand or appreciate large chunks of medieval texts since any number of cultural references will be lost on the modern reader; the same is true, of course, for medieval culture as a whole. But when reading the tales of the *Vie des Pères* there are a number of helpful indications:

- We are as sure as we can be that most fabliaux are *contes-à-rire*.
- The fabliaux and *Vie des Pères* were composed at about the same time, and in about the same geographical area.
- The fabliaux and tales of the *Vie des Pères* share a structure (introduction or prologue, narrative, epilogue or conclusion or *queue*).
- The fabliaux offer mock morals and sermons, the *Vie des Pères* serious ones.

¹⁴ When reading Michel Zink's rewritings of medieval Virgin miracles there is still a sense of fun to be felt alongside a sense of awe. This cannot only be put down to the medieval source material but must also reflect the character of the modern author who is selecting, shaping, and retelling it. Cf. *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame: contes chrétiens du Moyen Âge*, La Mémoire des Sources (Paris: Seuil, 1999).

¹⁵ Preface to *Medieval Comic Tales*, 2nd edn (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1996; orig. 1973), p. ix.

- Direct reference is made to the fabliaux in the *Vie des Pères* and to sermons in the fabliaux.
- On occasion, fabliaux and tales from the *Vie des Pères* were copied in the same manuscript, even under the same *titulus* ('du villain asnier'); elsewhere, *Vie des Pères* tales can be introduced by very fablialesque *tituli*.
- Even the author of the first *Vie des Pères*, admittedly formulaically, says that he will get on with his stories since people tend to find sermons dull.

The evidence of the present volume indicates that we are dealing with a culture which found humour everywhere: in religious settings (sculptural and decorative patterns, sermons), political settings, and other incongruous situations.

Pious Plots With Comic Potential

In the *Vie des Pères* we are not necessarily talking about belly-laughs and guffaws, but abundant ironic touches, wry smiles, and perhaps a few giggles.¹⁶ This said, what may be a humorous situation in a comic fabliau will almost always in a pious tale be played not purely for laughs but to promote a particular teaching. As for the sources for the laughs in our text, there are a number of obvious starting places. Contemporary literature provides analogues in certain cases; Frédéric Tubach's *Index Exemplorum* is always useful, as is Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*;¹⁷ some sources are to be found in the *Patrologia Latina*;¹⁸ others still may have oral sources.¹⁹ As Brewer wrote regarding medieval comic tales, daily life generates many of the stories we tell:

They are based on the human constants and self-contradictions of ordinary life, of the needs of food, drink, defecation, love, sex, money; and also on the potentially comic horror of death. Everything is seen in a comic spirit though it could equally be the subject of pathos, pity, tragedy.²⁰

¹⁶ This is the case in many texts. See for example Schmitt's *Pêcher d'exemples*.

¹⁷ Frédéric Tubach, *Index Exemplorum* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981); Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folk-tales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books and Local Legends* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955–58).

¹⁸ *Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latinae*, ed. by Jacques Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Parisiis, 1844–90).

¹⁹ Although not intended as a study of the tales' sources, I nonetheless flag those I came across in the commentaries contained in my *Tales of Vice and Virtue*.

²⁰ *Medieval Comic Tales*, p. xi.

That said, we must not discount the possibility that some of our stories, or elements in them, were the creation of our prodigiously talented medieval author. Much may depend on reading and performance: a tone of voice, a quick change of pace or pitch, a gesture, or a pause all have the potential to render the comic instantly serious and the serious instantly comic. Authorship remains just as consequential, however: the author's selection, ordering, and *mise en vers* of the various legends, stories, exempla, and miracles is remarkable. Of as much interest as their origins and sources is the setting of these narratives and sermons within the context of a relatively cohesive (if apparently heterogeneous) 'collective text'. The author's ability to interweave stories of many and varied origin — including occasionally, it would seem, of his own inspiration — into elaborate, entertaining, and edifying narratives is where his genius really lies.

The *Vie des Pères* is brimming with comic potential, and as Brian Levy demonstrated with Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, very often the difference between what is comic and what is not is simply in the telling. Performance is a vital — and intangible — element. Our author's apparent animosity towards *jongleurs* does complicate matters somewhat — unless it is ironic; it is certainly formulaic — as does his ostensible intention to become a religious.²¹ Our plots certainly need to be handled carefully if they are to have the desired effect. This handling may involve choosing hermits as actors or situating the narrative in sacred temporal and/or geographical *loci*. The following examples are far from complete:

- *Ivresse*: A holy hermit is persecuted by the devil. The hermit is finally offered a deal: if he chooses to commit one of three sins — drunkenness, fornication, murder — he will be left in peace. Of course he chooses the lesser sin, drunkenness, but once drunk he fornicates with his friend's unconscious wife. His friend witnesses this, attacks the hermit, and is killed in the struggle.

Enclosed within a story telling of demonic torment and arduous penance, this is a piece of narrative action which, if copied alone, would be genuinely funny. This plot reminds the reader of certain fabliau situations: the misused wishes in *Les Quatre souhaits saint Martin*;²² fablialesque trickery and deceit with the

²¹ A brief, recent, and useful summary on the question of the jongleur's place in society can be found in the introduction to *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, ed. by Paul Bretel, Traductions des Classiques du Moyen Age, 64 (Paris: Champion, 2003), pp. 20–27, 'Jonglerie et exclusion'.

²² *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*, ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico Van den Boogaard, 10 vols (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983–98), IV/31 (hereafter cited as *NRCF* by volume and text number).

intention of bedding a woman (e.g. *Cele qui se fist foutre sur la fosse de son mari*, *NRCF*, III/20); fight scenes and fatal accidents (*Le Sacristain*, VII/74, *Les Trois Boçus*, V/47). It also recalls the conundrum faced by the greedy man and the jealous man in *Le Couvoiteus et l'envieus* (VI/71).²³ It is context alone which prevents us from laughing at this episode in *Ivresse*: we have witnessed the demonic torment suffered by the hermit (129 lines) and will again witness his long road to salvation through self-denial and intense hardship (130 lines). Also, hermits seem to be about the only characters exempt from ridicule in the fabliaux. But even so I think the comic potential in *Ivresse* shines through: the central section telling of the hermit's drunkenness, fornication, and murder comprises ninety lines, a substantial segment of the tale, and much of the language comes straight out of the fabliau world (the miller rushes out with an axe, almost mirroring the husband in *Les Perdrix*, and he shouts: 'Il est m'avis, par m'ame, que cil ivres gist a ma fame!', vv. 15378–79).

- *Prévôt d'Aquilee*: Considering himself extremely virtuous, a holy hermit commits the sin of pride by asking God who is his equal on earth.²⁴ He is horrified to learn that his equal is neither a religious nor a hermit, but the Provost of Aquilea. The hermit sets out to see for himself and is well received by the Provost: his host will be away tonight but tells his wife to treat the hermit exactly as she treats her husband. These words are taken literally. First, they sit down to eat with the household. Wonderful foods and wines are set before all except the wife and the hermit, who are served nothing but water, stale bread, and cabbage. They then go to bed — the wife insists that they share a bed — and when the hermit feels her naked body lying next to him he becomes aroused and tries to leave. She prevents him from leaving and intentionally seduces him, to the point where he feels ready to give in to his carnal desires. At this point, the lady says that if he gets up with her and does exactly as she says she will let him have his way with her. She directs him to get into a marble bathtub filled with icy water. He does so and is made to stay in the water until he feels that he will die of cold. They then return to bed and she offers herself to him, but the hermit is now trembling with cold and his

²³ The motif of the losing of an eye, played for grim laughs in *Le Couvoiteus et l'envieus* and in *Du pseudome qui rescolt son compere de noier* (*NRCF*, VIII/89) appears in the *Vie des Pères* tale *Meurtrier* as a very real sign of self-mortification.

²⁴ The tale belongs to a group of tales that Louis Karl has termed 'le cycle de la fraternité'. See Karl, 'La légende de L'Ermite et le jongleur'.

desires have totally subsided. So she warms him up with her own body and, gradually, he becomes aroused again. Once more, when he is ready to give in to his lustful desires, she leads him to the icy tub. When the wife leads the hermit back to the bed from the icy bath she is true to her word:

'Frere, vos feroiz
vostre voloir quant vos voldroiz.'
Por ce li dist que bien savoit
que del fere talent n'avoit,
qu'il trembloit de froit dent a dent. (vv. 14008–12)

Eventually the hermit understands the virtue of the Provost: to live in the world and resist its temptations is at least as worthy as to live life as a religious. Taking words literally is a staple of fabliaux plots (e.g. *La Vieille qui oint la palme au chevalier*, NRCF, VI/72; *Estula*, IV/38; *Le Povre Mercier*, VIII/97, etc.). The evidence of two other *Vie des Pères* tales, *Merlot* and *Haleine*, shows conclusively that the power of words was quite clear to our author: in the first, a peasant loses the favour of Merlin when his address becomes increasingly discourteous ('Sire Merlin' → 'Merlin' → 'Merlot'). In the second, a forester is told to murder the first person who comes to him with a message from the king. The intended victim is delayed by hearing Mass, and the perpetrator of the crime, the victim's *mestre*, goes to the forester to find out what is happening. The forester, obeying his orders to the letter, then kills the *mestre*. Neither of these instances, strangely enough, is particularly comic. However, in *Prévôt d'Aquilée* we encounter an instance of words being taken literally which, since they appear in a relatively harmless context, must surely have given rise to some knowing smiles. The butt of the joke is, surprisingly enough, a holy hermit.

The irony of this situation is surely intentional: indeed, reading the author's description of the frozen hermit, it is difficult for the modern reader to imagine that this would not have inspired mirth in the audience. The dramatic, if not comic, potential of the situation is fully exploited in that the couple repeat the process a number of times. On every occasion the wife is successful in first warming up the hermit, and then rekindling his desire with her kisses and embraces; and on every occasion she then plunges him back into the icy bath. The hermit has no idea what is going on, only adding to the gentle amusement. And the motif of the bath is a familiar one: baths in bathhouses were, according to James A. Brundage, an 'engin d'amour'; and baths are found in a wide variety of myths and narratives, to different ends.²⁵ In a number of comic fabliaux a nice

²⁵ James A. Brundage, plates 4 and 5 in *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

hot bath prepares the lusty bather for bed and sex (which may not in fact be offered to him). In *Le Foteor* (NRCF, VI/59) and *Le Prestre teint* (VII/81), both a bath and dinner precede sex; in *Le Prestre comporté* (IX/102) the amorous priest is prevented from having sex with the woman when her husband strangles him in a bath. Then, in Marie de France's fablialesque lay of *Equitan* a boiling bath serves as punishment for the eponymous, murderous adulterer. In our tale, *Prévot d'Aquilée*, the abominable, icy bath takes away the bather's lust, even though (somewhat ironically) sex will indeed be offered to him when back in bed: it is a tool in his salvation. Of course, immersion in icy water is traditionally one way to mortify the flesh and is even one of hell's torments: today we think of hell as hot, but the deepest circle of Dante's *Inferno* is cold and icy.²⁶ So, the irony of the bathtub here as a symbol of virtue and spiritual cleansing cannot have been lost on a medieval audience. This may have been a well-known story, but its rewriting here suggests great skill, and its subsequent reading or telling offers an opportunity for many multiple ironies.

The following morning, his desire left unsated, the hermit, of course, acknowledges his mistake and bemoans his pride. He asks the lady if she really treats her husband this way, and she replies that she does: the provost only eats what the hermit ate the previous day, whilst all around enjoy the best dishes; and if he desires her physically she plunges him into the tub of icy water, only to warm him up again by rubbing her body against his. The hermit realizes the worthiness of this couple who are constantly tempted but do not sin.

The audience knows that the hermit is not in mortal danger and that the sin he has committed will soon be rectified. Although we are not aware of the couple's regular strategy until the end of the story, we suspect as much as the narrative progresses. The repetition of icy baths and carnal reheatings is comic in structure and even in tone. What is more, the wife is a positive reflection of the fabliau-woman: she, like many of them, is in control of her own body and fate, and also in control of the desires of the men who court her. She is a reverse image of the trickster, perfectly aware of the power both of words and of her own sexuality. If ever there was a role model to set against the negative women of medieval comic texts, then she is it. And the husband is aware of the ruse, recalling such married tricksters as those in *Le Sacristain* (NRCF, VII/74a). And the context of the tale even allows us to laugh at the virtuous hermit tricked by her and her husband.

²⁶ L. Gougaud, *Dévotions et pratiques ascétiques du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1925), pp. 175–85.

- *Jardinier*: A husband gives alms generously but is convinced by his wife that he should desist from so doing and save a surplus in case of illness. Sure enough, injury strikes since his new behaviour displeases God. A bemused doctor threatens amputation as a first and last resort and it is only when, in a vision, a voice tells the man that he will be cured if he reverts to his former charitable ways that he understands his mistake. After the vision, his injury has been cured and he sends away the even more bemused doctor who has come to amputate his foot.
- *Merlot*: The wife of a perfectly decent peasant incites him gradually to lose respect for Merlin, his supernatural benefactor.
- *Crapaud*: A son refuses to help feed his impoverished parents on the advice of his wife. He is punished by a piece of meat miraculously metamorphosing into a toad which then attaches itself onto his cheek. A painful period of repentance ensues before he confesses his sin and is liberated from his reptilian torment.

The wife in *Prévôt d'Aquilée* sets an excellent example for fabliaux women in a fablialesque context. But more typically comic women can be found in other tales, notably the domineering wives of *Jardinier*, *Merlot*, and *Crapaud*. In all three cases the wives of upright men persuade their husbands to act unwisely. *Jardinier* has all the elements required for a farce or Molière plot and could so easily have been played for laughs (see for example *Le Vilain mire*, *NRCF*, II/13). Indeed, one eyebrow is surely raised when God is described as 'drois fisiçiens et fins mires' (v. 3298). The husband is terribly anguished by the prospect of losing a foot, and indeed by the general medical scene: the image of the doctor is anything but positive. Along with *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, this tale is perhaps the clearest example of a counter-fabliau in the *Vie des Pères*. But the same might be said about *Merlot*. Indeed, *Merlot* is copied in at least one manuscript under the *titulus* 'Le Villain asnier'. In this tale, the wife is very firmly at the root of her family's downfall. It is she who persuades her husband to return ever more grudgingly to his annual meeting with Merlin, his benefactor. In the end, Merlin loses patience and wreaks terrible punishment on the man and his family. In *Crapaud* we find a similar situation to *Jardinier*, but there are some important differences too. First, *Crapaud* is certainly critical of the wife and son, but equally disapproves of the father's *démésure*: he was unwise, when his son married, to give him almost everything that he owned. Then, in *Jardinier*, we learn that the man's charity pleases God whereas in *Crapaud* it is simply the son's Christian and civil duty to take care of his parents. Finally, there is a sin committed and penance due in *Crapaud*, whereas this is not really the case in

Jardinier: it is really just an error of judgement. Strangely enough, it is *Crapaud* which seems to me to be more comic: the son here is a sinner who has acted foolishly and selfishly and we can laugh at his comeuppance — wandering around the land with this bloody-great toad hanging from his cheek — knowing also that his wife has been exposed as a spiteful individual. Consequently, we can laugh at her too. (Quite how a reader would ‘perform’ the penance is open to debate.) However much the plot of *Jardinier* may resemble that of a comic fabliau, we are less inclined to laugh at the man’s suffering since he did not really bring it upon himself. That is not to say that we do not smile at the end of the tale where, ironically, his wife is totally absent.

- *Renieur*: A man is eager to marry his widowed neighbour. The neighbour resists his overtures until she witnesses the man praying before a statue of the Virgin and, unbeknown to him, the statue miraculously bowing to him. She now happily becomes his wife.

Again we find the *topos* of an author, audience, and some characters complicit in the knowledge of some vital information denied to the central figure of the tale. In this instance it is a lovelorn man (although it is never entirely clear whether this is a case of love or lust). How could he not be aware of the Virgin’s approval? And what should he think of the woman’s sudden change of heart? The Virgin here plays the role of the matchmaker, a role for which there is a clear parallel in the comic fabliaux, namely the eponymous *Auberee* (*NRCE*, I/4), a story equally dependent on ignorance and shared knowledge.

- *Miserere*: A simple man offers a grammatically flawed but sincere prayer on a daily basis: *Miserere tui, deus*. This prayer pleases God, who always rewards it with a vision, but not the hermit under whose tutelage he lives. Once corrected, he mistakenly believes that he has been sinning for thirty years and has lost God’s favour, a belief reinforced by the absence of a vision when he utters his new prayer. The hermit eventually realizes his mistake and the simple man reverts back to his grammatically flawed prayer, once again to be rewarded by heaven.

This is clearly a situation that could be played for laughs: the hermit, misunderstanding or unaware of the virtue of the man’s prayer, insists that he change it.²⁷

²⁷ As with all the tales discussed in this essay, I in no way wish to appear frivolous about these small masterpieces of pious literature. *Miserere* is a deeply moving and sensitively executed narrative. For a slightly modernized version of the text, offering helpful vocabulary and a brief commentary, see Galderisi, *Diegesis*.

The 'correct' version of the prayer is not, however, correct in this context, and the man suffers because of the hermit's misplaced (but genuinely good) intentions. He delivers a good but misplaced short sermon in yet another situation which is clearly analogous to those devilishly comic misunderstandings so common in the fabliaux. Here, of course, the situation is anything but comic. One wonders whether the author deliberately uses such situations to satisfy his audience's taste for narratives similar to comic texts while, at the same time, diverting them from the stories which he criticizes so strongly in his general prologue. Notwithstanding the fact that, as with all these narratives, there is a serious Christian lesson to be learned (in this case primarily that of humility), there is every reason to believe that this tale, where no one is harmed and no sin committed, might be performed in a lively and humorous way. The fact that the story is enclosed between a didactic prologue and epilogue serves to give the reader/performer all the more space to make the most of both the story's pious and very gentle comic potential.

- *Copeaux*: A good and pious man lives off the labour of his land. One day he notices some wood shavings on his land and throws them into a neighbouring field where his neighbour's wheat is growing. At harvest time, however, he remembers his act and feels extremely guilty: he decides to go to confession. A hermit tells him that his penance is to find a flowering dry stick. A fortnight later he comes across three robbers who ask him about himself. He explains his sin and penance. One of the three, struck by the severity of the man's penance for such a tiny sin, instantly repents and asks to see the hermit to beg forgiveness for his own, much greater sins. The hermit subsequently tells the penitent robber that his penance is to find a spring which flows upwards. Both penitents search high and low but do not find their goals. Returning empty-handed to the hermit, they are told that they have indeed succeeded in their penances: the tears of the robber's repentance, flowing from the heart to eyes, constitute an upward-running spring. The flowering stick is the robber himself: he is dry and barren when a sinner but blossoms after repentance. Both men are absolved of their sins.

- *Haleine*: A hermit considers himself so highly that he sets out to seek his spiritual equal. The reason for his pride is that he is fit and healthy yet eats only apples sent by God and found in the stream neighbouring his hermitage. He soon discovers not his equal but his better: downstream there is another hermit who eats only the apple peels the first hermit throws back into the water!

These two tales show opposite sides of a comic coin. In *Copeaux* we encounter a simple man who has committed no real sin but believes that he has to do

penance. The example of the man's simple faith also leads a murderous criminal to repent. Here we have a character who is *simple* but not *nice*. As in *Miserere*, it is tempting to read the story as a dig at simple folk, particularly when read in noble or courtly circles; but again, as in *Miserere*, it is the simple man whose life is ennobled. He is so humble that he accepts a seemingly impossible penance — to find a stream which flows upwards — in order to expiate a sin which is not one: he threw shavings onto his neighbour's field. This is a pleasant story of innocent, indeed naive, faith, one which brings a smile to the reader. In *Haleine* we encounter the opposite: just as we saw in *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, a hermit wants to meet his spiritual equal, and this leads to an ironic, if not amusing dénouement.²⁸ *Haleine* also presents a scene imbued with comic potential earlier in the narrative: a master is jealous of the favour the king shows to one of the boys in his charge and wants to change the way the king views the boy. His plan is ingenious: he tells the boy that the king finds his breath repulsive and that, next time the king wants to kiss or embrace him, he should turn his head. He then tells the king that the boy has revealed his revulsion at the king's breath: it makes his stomach churn. The astonished and furious king can easily test this: just watch how the boy turns his head the next time they kiss or embrace. Of course, the ruse works marvellously and the king plans cruel revenge on the boy. Up to this point there are certainly opportunities for comedy if that is what our author desires. The master's manipulation of the king and the boy brings to mind numerous similar instances in the fabliaux (e.g. *Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne*, *NRCF*, II/9, or *La Borgoise d'Orliens*, III/19), and all will be gleeful when, in the end, the master falls foul of his own plot and is killed in the boy's place. But it is what comes next that has real comic potential: the king is naturally displeased at hearing that his breath stinks, and he decides to check if it is true. He has five young maidens brought before him, 'gentilz femes simples et beles' (v. 3536), and sets about wooing them. All is fine, and this satisfies him that his breath is not so bad after all — 'per les pucelles sot / que de cel vice teche n'ot' (vv. 3541–42) — although whether the girls would have had the temerity to say anything negative to the king is open to question. At any rate, this solution satisfies the king and, I would argue, might delight the audience. What stops us from laughing out loud is that we know that this could mean a sticky end for our hero, the much maligned boy. Luckily, he will be protected from the king's misplaced wrath and will (circuitously) go on to become a holy and pious hermit.

²⁸ For a study of *Haleine*, see chapter six of Galderisi, *Diegesis*.

- *Goliard*: A goliardic clerk enters a monastery with the express intention of gaining the monks' trust and then stealing the *tresor*. As the weeks, months, and years go by he finds one reason after another to put off his plan — for example he will go after supper, or after Mass, or when spring comes. Eventually, twenty years later he realizes his fault, repents, and is blessed by the Virgin.

This story is very reminiscent of Frank Capra's 1946 masterpiece, *It's a Wonderful Life*, where James Stewart plays George Bailey, a man yearning to leave the small town of Bedford Falls. He never does manage to leave and, due to the intervention of an angel named Clarence, eventually understands just how worthwhile his life actually is. Now, in our medieval story, a similar scenario has clear comic potential, although it might be argued that stealing from the monastery is a terrible sin and no laughing matter. Other details lead us to suspect, however, that the author was fully aware of the story's comic potential. In particular, the name chosen for the protagonist — in a predominantly anonymous *dramatis personae* — is *Lechefrite*. This name plays on his character traits. We are initially given details of his *lechoiz*, his love of pleasure, and his haunting of taverns: the name is hardly flattering. Our goliardic cleric is a worldly antithesis to the austere hermits encountered elsewhere in the text, only ending his debauched and sinful way of life through lack of funds. There is even irony here in that poverty is a desirable state for holy people. It is also noteworthy that the motivation behind the goliardic cleric's repentance is in doubt right until the end of the tale. In fact, being a *goliard* in itself implies a certain failure in life — being out on the street with no money and no position is one of the fears that keeps the *goliard* in the abbey — and our cleric perhaps parodies this failure, described in multiple instalments, in his continued inability to leave the abbey. Then, he finally admits that he has never prayed properly — ironically, he admits this during a 'proper' prayer — and vows not to carry out his intended act of *traïson* against God and godly people. What is clear is that in this tale the author shows himself to be fully able to weave comic and ironic touches into his pious story.

- *Image du diable*: The figure of the devil produced by a sacristan-sculptor is so repulsive that the devil himself finds it repugnant. He appears to the sculptor and orders it to be made less ugly. For three nights the sculptor refuses and chases him away, and this leads the devil to plot his revenge: he implants desire for each other into the hearts of the sacristan and a local, pious widow. Driven by his diabolic lust, the sacristan seeks and immediately wins the love of the widow. The widow persuades the sacristan to rob the abbey so that the couple might run away together, and he agrees. However, when the sacristan

has stolen the abbey's treasures the devil rouses the monks and leads them to the fleeing couple. The sacristan is soundly beaten, led back to the abbey, and placed in chains. The devil again appears to him and offers him a way out of his predicament: the sacristan must make another statue of the devil that is less offensive. This he agrees to do and so the devil frees him. The following morning, the sacristan appears at Matins and the other monks are both angry and terrified to see him. They ask him how he has managed to escape from his confinement, and the sacristan — following the advice of the devil — pretends to be confused and surprised. He denies ever having been detained and insists that the other monks are mad to imagine such a thing. He equally denies ever having stolen the abbey's treasures. The monks rush to the cell where they believe the sacristan to have been imprisoned and are astonished to find there, in his place, the devil himself: it must have been the devil who stole the abbey's treasures. After a chase and the attempted abduction of one of the monks, the devil escapes and the monks beg the sacristan to forgive them, for they believe that he has been wrongly accused. The sacristan does confess his sin, but, all the same, keeps his word to the devil and makes a statue that is much less ugly. The woman is also eventually saved.

Here the devil himself is a vainly comic figure, and the tale's dénouement is more than a little ambiguous. The comic potential comes from the notion underpinning the entire story rather than the detailed, and at times contrived, plot: the devil finds his own likeness in a newly sculptured statue so repugnant that he goes to great pains to have it altered. The devil's subterfuge is both successful and, at times, amusing, as he cajoles, threatens, and begs to have his statue made less vile. Now, this certainly appears odd to the modern reader, but then *Image du diable* is an exemplary tale in the *speculum mundi* tradition, refracting and deforming. It does not deal with the false faiths which are elsewhere perceived as a real, visible, and dangerous threat to the very fabric of contemporary society. It is perhaps this which allows us to breathe more easily and laugh at the conceited, vaguely desperate devil. Again, the potential for lively delivery is clear: the author makes much of the verbal exchanges throughout the narrative; there are a number of comings and goings as the devil appears to the sculptor; and there is certainly ample room for funny faces and grotesque gestures. The fact that the sculptor finally agrees to change the statue is confusing but does not take away from a story which laughs, for most of the time at any rate, at the devil himself.

Laughing and Smiling

If we were to take at face value the following extract from the author's general prologue to the collection, we should expect the ensuing text to be dry, uninteresting, and serious:

Une gent sont ki vont contant
de cort a autre et vont trovant
chansonetes, moz et flabiaz
por gaaignier les biaz morsiaz.
Mais je pris petit lor affaire. (*Fornication imitée*, vv. 33–37)

Serious it certainly is, but dry and uninteresting? I have outlined above some of the many instances where there seems to be clear comic potential in the plot and for performance. Another interesting investigation is to consider the narrative moments where characters laugh or smile. Henri Bergson wrote that indifference is the natural environment of the comic and that laughter has no greater foe than emotion, but this is not quite the case in our medieval pious tales.²⁹ Whilst it is obviously true that the devil laughing at his victim evokes fear rather than fun, we also witness real laughter and smiling at moments of high drama. To what extent the text reflects the character of our anonymous author is impossible to ascertain, but the evidence of his narratives suggests a streetwise, realistic individual who accepts that in the real world people do not only spend their time contemplating eternity and expiating sin: they eat, drink, have sex, play, and they smile.

It takes only a few examples to illustrate the variety of references to laughter and smiling by the narrator and dramatis personae. In the prologue to *Crucifix*, the narrator insists that the evil heart laughs at the misfortune of others, that we should choose to love God but that good can easily be undone. It equally stresses the true nature of things. Similarly, in *Piège au diable*, which appears in the third *Vie des Pères*, the devil's laughter strikes a terrifying tone.³⁰ Another case which

²⁹ Henri Louis Bergson, *Le Rire: essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris: Alcan, 1920).

³⁰ A holy hermit is constantly tormented by the devil and decides to set a trap: the devil learns of the hermit's plan and destroys those traps already made. Then, some ladies come to visit the hermit and one of them decides not to return to the town: it is dark and the weather is not good. Much against his better judgement, the hermit lets her stay and, after various preliminaries, the couple have sex. The hermit instantly regrets his actions, despairs, and slays the woman. He hides her body, and so when her husband comes to search the hermitage, he finds no trace of her. But the devil, disguised as a forester, tells the husband where to find the body, and the hermit, found guilty of the murder, is sentenced to death. At the moment of the hermit's execution, hideous laughter rings out. The hermit explains that that was the sound

shows laughter not to equate with comedy or humour is *Nièce*, where the virtuous niece of a hermit has been led astray by the devil and becomes a prostitute. Her uncle seeks her out in order to rescue her, initially in disguise. His niece does not recognize him and meets him with the laughter of a woman lacking any morals or hope. Her laughter is mocking and sinister, emblematic of her physically and morally dishevelled state. In *Usurier*, the author offers an exemplum which recalls a story in circulation at that time and is perhaps imitated by the fabliau of *Les Trois bossus* (NRCF, V/42). In the comic tale, three dwarfs are locked in a chest and die of suffocation, and the subsequent disposal of their corpses causes much mirth. In *Usurier*, a usurer's penance is to be locked in a chest full of venomous snakes, toads, and spiders. He is forgotten for three days, and when the chest is finally opened there is a dazzling light and God announces that the usurer's soul has been saved and that he is now in Paradise. The *topos* of the chest being played straight here is extremely effective.

There are wry smiles in *Malaquin* and *Demi-ami*. In the first it is the author who provokes this by noting at the end of the prologue that he should get to the story since audiences find sermons boring. The self-deprecating humour of these admittedly formulaic lines is clear. Such comments are hardly unique in medieval literature: the opening lines of *Le Pliçon* — the unexceptional fabliau which is the source of the present volume's title — offer a splendid example:

Gens sont qui ont plus kier risees
Et mokeries desghisees
Oïr que ne face siermons. (NRCF, X/II6, vv. 1–3)

In the second the wry smile belongs to the father of a young and impetuous boy who boasts about the number of friends he has. The father sets him a test, aware of the outcome in advance, and his knowing smile is also full of love. The son initially offers his father a gesture of disdain — he leaves his company *sanz congié prendre* (v. 16757) — but learns the lesson of who are his true friends in the end.

There is, however, one tale which has comic laughter at its very centre. This tale is *Queue*:

- St Jerome is living outside Bethlehem in the company of another hermit. One day he and a colleague see a well-dressed woman who is wearing a long train which trails on the ground. When she comes to a muddy patch, she

of the devil, recounts the whole story and, since the crowd sees the devil's hand in the hermit's crimes and now consider him less guilty of his crimes, he is released to do proper penance and die a holy death. *Piège au diable* (*Vie des Pères*, ed. by Lecoy, III, vv. 22026–625).

picks up her train, but there is a devil riding on it, and as she lifts it up the devil is thrown into a puddle. Once past the mud, she lets down her train again and the now dirty devil climbs back on board. The two holy men laugh at this scene. The woman hears them and turns around, thinking that they are laughing at her. St Jerome assures her that this is not the case and explains what he has just witnessed; he also says that there is a second devil riding on her head-dress. She realizes her sin, confesses, and is absolved. She vows to do away with her excessively lavish clothes. St Jerome magically renders the devils unable to move and displays them to the people of Bethlehem.

Jean-Charles Payen noted that this tale is more amusing than severe.³¹ It is certainly classic sermon material, gently warning women, in an entertaining way, against overindulging in fineries which will drag them and their husbands down to hell (and of which examples abound).³² What is surprising is that it is St Jerome whose laughter is pivotal in the tale. After all, he had a strong reputation for being severe and an ardent antifeminist. But to dwell on such details would be to miss the point completely: *Queue* confirms the humanistic nature of our author, and Jerome's humanity is expressed through his laughter and by his kind words to the woman — *nos rions de vostre bien* — who, let us remember, is at this point plagued by demons. This is a decided shift from the more accusatory and minatory sermons found elsewhere. We are also encouraged to laugh at the descriptions of the woman's long *bliaut* and lacy, yellow wimple: the reading of this part of the text invites the use of comic mimicry. The woman is shamed by Jerome's laughter, but she is addressed in a courtly tone as befits thirteenth-century men speaking to a lady; and although the saint introduces a sinister parallel, in that the devil *de vos mesprisons ce rist*, all is well in the end.

Conclusion

Generations of historians have attempted to unravel the intricacies of medieval laughter without coming to any firm conclusions.³³ Unsurprisingly, it seems that

³¹ Jean-Charles Payen, *Le Motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale* (Geneva: Droz, 1971), p. 555.

³² Brian Levy gives such details in his monograph *Nine Verse Sermons by Nicholas Bozon: The Art of an Anglo-Norman Poet and Preacher*, Medium Ævum Monographs, n.s., 11 (Oxford, 1981), p. 68.

³³ A useful overview of such scholarship is provided by Johan Verberckmoes, 'What About Medieval Humour? Some Historiography', in *Risus Mediaevalis: Laughter in Medieval Litera-*

(as with most literary criticism) much is down to personal opinion. It should not shock us to encounter a juxtaposition of the comic and the solemn: this essay suggests that, in many cases, it is a question of comic potential, where context and reading dictate tone. The narrative episodes presented here are relatively small elements of deadly serious, pious tales; all are enclosed within a much larger, sincere, and brilliant 'poésie de conversion'. Brian Levy's notion of reading 'at plot level' brings an interesting dimension to our understanding of medieval literature, for it awakens our senses and challenges our sensibilities: there are many instances in the plots and telling of Old French pious tales where comic potential — and other characteristics — best emerge simply by reading the story. (There are, of course, many other parodies, word plays, and borrowings which come to light upon closer examination of the text.) This is far from being a world turned upside-down: everything is resolved properly in the end, with good prevailing over evil. But that is no reason to read these tales purely as dry sermons, in a monotone, as if in a hushed church: skilled oral delivery of this eminently readable, if not performable, pious material could make the tales variously as comic or as shocking or as prayerful as required. This is courtly literature, after all, sharing manuscript space with romance, miracles, prayers, and fabliaux. If the most unlikely of characters, St Jerome, is heard to utter the words 'nos rions de vostre bien', then it becomes clear that for both author and audience — as for the dedicatee of this volume — even the darkest situation must have its funny side.

HUY RIRE ET PUIS DEMAIN PLEURER:
TAKING HUMOUR SERIOUSLY IN THE *MORALITÉS*

Alan Hindley

Theatre historians have long since learned to be wary of genre divisions in late medieval plays, especially of the artificial separation of *théâtre religieux* and *théâtre profane*: there were after all mystery plays that dramatized non-religious subjects (*Le Siège d'Orléans*) as well as morality plays with apparently secular themes (*La Condamnation de Banquet*). Distinctions of genre certainly did exist — witness programmes consisting of a *sottie*, a *moralité*, and a *farce* — though accounts of performances often confuse the issue by grouping play-types together as simply *jeux* or even *farces*. However, such demarcations were sometimes of little concern to the printers who did much to ensure the survival of late medieval play texts: *c'est la farce ou sottie des Vigilles Triboulet* one title informs us, whilst another advertises a play by Jean d'Abundance as a *mystère, moralité et figure de la passion*. As Eugénie Droz put it: 'on glisse imperceptiblement d'un genre à l'autre'.¹ From this starting point, this essay will attempt an analysis of the nature and function of humour in the old French religious *moralités*, part of a corpus of plays dating from the late fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries.² In their aim to bring men and women to penitence and faith, their largely anonymous authors by no means eschewed the value of humour. When homiletic material came to be presented 'par personnages', it was perhaps inevitable that playwrights were unable to resist the temptation to sugar

¹ *Le Recueil Trepperel*, vol. 1: *Les Sotties*, ed. by E. Droz (Paris: Droz, 1935), p. lxi.

² For the most up-to-date repertory of the *moralités*, see Werner Helmich, *Moralités françaises: Réimpression fac-simile de vingt-deux pièces allégoriques imprimées aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles*, 3 vols (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980).

the didactic pill. Moreover, the varied nature of the dramatic experience that characterizes the dramaturgy of the later Middle Ages makes it important to consider performance realities just as much as a play's 'thématique'; hence the 'interference' in the *moralités* from related play-types such as the *farces* and the *sotties* with which they were sometimes performed.³

If these play-types are sometimes hard to distinguish, it is no less easy to define precisely any particular one. This is especially true of the morality plays 'dont l'ensemble accuse plus de disparate que d'uniformité', as Jonathan Beck has recently pointed out,⁴ a point he develops elsewhere not without a certain frustration:

On sait ce qu'est une moralité: pièce dramatique médiévale (pas tout à fait, on en publie et représente encore au XVII^e siècle), généralement brève (mais *L'Homme juste et l'homme mondain*, à 84 personnages, compte 30.000 vers), aux personnages allégoriques (pas toujours), qui propose à son public une leçon édifiante (c'est quelquefois le cas) [. . .]. De grandes lacunes restent à combler dans notre connaissance de ce genre protéiforme et fuyant, dont les titres sont certainement mieux connus que les textes.⁵

This picture is further complicated by the uncertain chronology of the plays, many of which, though published and performed in the sixteenth century, may date from much earlier. Moreover their long history — from the late fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries — as well as their varying themes and authorial viewpoints, reflect a variety of *mentalités*, depending on whether the prime focus of their allegory was religious, satirical, political, or social. It is Alan E. Knight's generic model, however, that draws particular attention to the comic elements in the *moralités*, the presence of which led nineteenth-century critics to fail to grasp the importance of the mixed genre, in which didacticism and entertainment can successfully co-exist. 'Thus,' Knight states, 'in conformity with the Christian vision of the world, medieval writers could place serious truths in the mouths of the low and the humble, and playwrights could exemplify such truths

³ On this, see Jelle Koopmans, 'Le *Mystère de Saint Sebastien*: scénographie et théorie des genres', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 16 (1990), 143–56.

⁴ Jonathan Beck, 'La place de la moralité de *Bien Avisé Mal Avisé* dans le théâtre en France au Moyen Age', in *Le Théâtre français des années 1450–1550: état actuel des recherches*, Textes réunis par Olga Anna Duhl, Centre de Recherches: Le Texte et L'Edition (Dijon: Université de Bourgogne, 2002), pp. 15–24 (p. 15).

⁵ Jonathan Beck, *Théâtre et propagande aux débuts de la Réforme: six pièces polémiques du Recueil La Vallière* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1986), pp. 17–18.

in comic scenes.⁶ For Knight, this comment about scenes of comic relief would seem to apply more to the *mystères* than to the *moralités*, which, he contends 'have virtually no such scenes'.⁷ Our aim in these pages, however, is to attempt an examination of the nature and function of humour in the *moralités*, from which 'le comique' is by no means absent. The essay will fall into two parts, the first of which will survey some of the *procédés comiques* employed, whether to bolster a play's message, to enhance a particular satirical slant, to parody the genre's own presentational techniques, or simply *pour faire rire*. The second part will focus more closely on aspects of the fool's role in the morality plays, an evident source of humour given its association with carnival; but also, in its linkage with the themes of sin and death, a means of rendering more palatable the serious message of some of the religious moralities especially, recently defined as 'la prédication par personnages'.⁸

To illustrate the unsatisfactory nature of a genre model which attempts to separate the comic from the religious, Knight cites the example of André de la Vigne's *Moralité de l'Aveugle et du Boiteux* (250 lines), composed as part of the *Mystère de Saint Martin* performed in Seurre in 1496.⁹ As Knight points out, this is an unusual morality play in that it employs farce characters and farce humour to make its point: a blind man and a cripple are healed by St Martin, despite their attempts to avoid it. The blind man, deeply moved, gives thanks for his healing, but the cripple curses the saint for depriving him of his livelihood. The dual function of these traditionally popular figures is clear enough: on one level they provide within the broader and serious dramatization of the life of the saint an element of comic relief that relies heavily on physical and verbal acrobatics, interspersed with some broad, and at times scatological, humour. At the same time, however, the duo's inability to avoid God's grace alerts us to the serious comment on the human condition that lies behind their farcical antics: the soul, as represented by the blind man, welcomes the saint's intervention with joy, whereas the sinful physical body, as represented by the cripple, can only bemoan the loss of the pleasures of the flesh. The two characters of de la Vigne's play thus

⁶ Alan E. Knight, *Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval French Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸ Charles Mazouer, *Le Théâtre français du moyen âge* (Paris: Editions SEDES, 1998), p. 248.

⁹ Knight, *Aspects of Genre*, pp. 7–8; see also 'La *Moralité de l'aveugle et du boiteux* d'Andrieu de la Vigne', ed. by A. Duplat, in *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature*, 20 (1983), 41–79.

embody the basic structure of the religious *moralités*, which sometimes represent Everyman as two separate figures, one with a propensity to Good, the other with a propensity to Evil, as for instance in the anonymous *Bien avisé Mal avisé*, or in Simon Bourgoïn's *L'Homme juste et l'Homme mondain*.¹⁰ The difference between Bourgoïn's play and de la Vigne's more modest interlude is essentially one of degree: each appears at opposite ends of a range of morality dramas in which humour has its part to play. This is not to say that we should regard the *moralités* as examples of 'le théâtre comique' as did Louis Petit de Julleville.¹¹ To entertain is not their prime function, as the titles of many of them clearly show: *La Moralité de Mundus, Caro, Demonia, en laquelle verrez les durs assauts et tentations qu'ils font au chevalier chrestien et comme par conseil de son bon esprit avec la grâce de Dieu les vaincra et à la fin aura le royaume de paradis*.¹² However, as in the contemporary *mystères*, laughter is an important tool in the hands of these largely anonymous playwrights, who knew how to use it as an effective means of 'joindre le plaisant au solide et à l'utile'.¹³

What we need first to understand is that humour is not generally in these exemplary and often admonitory plays an end in itself, but rather a means to an end: these are not 'des machines à rire' in the manner of the contemporary farces;¹⁴ rather are they plays in which comic elements serve more serious aims, where *utilitas* takes precedence over *delectatio*. This is not to say, however, that 'pure' humour finds no place there, for it can certainly be seen in some of the 'jeux avec le langage' that spread across the whole spectrum of late medieval theatre: in the overblown and often racy utterances of the stage fool, for instance (as we shall see later); in the verbal sparring of the allegorical vices and virtues,

¹⁰ The analysis outlined here is that of Knight, *Aspects of Genre*, p. 8. In contrast, *L'Homme pecheur* (22,000 lines) presents the Everyman figure as a single character torn apart by good and bad impulses. The texts of these three important plays, which remain unedited, can be found in Werner Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, vol. 1.

¹¹ See L. Petit de Julleville, *Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au moyen âge* (Paris: L. Cerf, 1886).

¹² *Le Théâtre français avant la Renaissance 1450–1550*, ed. by E. Fournier (Paris, 1872; repr., New York: Burt Franklin, 1964), pp. 199–209.

¹³ Mazouer, *Le Théâtre français du moyen âge*, p. 264. See also the article by Annelies J. Wirth, 'Dulcis et utile: The Literary Traditions of Satire in the French Morality Play', *Tréteaux*, 2 (1980), 17–22.

¹⁴ Cf. Bernadette Rey-Flaud, *La Farce ou la machine à rire: théorie d'un genre dramatique, 1450–1550* (Geneva: Droz, 1984).

all the more potentially comic, in a play such as *L'Homme juste et l'Homme mondain*, for their repetitive angularity.

The appearance of allegorical figures that are so much a feature of the *moralités* inevitably raises the question of how, to use one of the traditional definitions of comedy, could there possibly be such a thing as 'comédie de caractère' in the case of these plays' fixed and unchanging abstractions. One of the difficulties of the morality plays for contemporary audiences indeed is that they do not correspond to our idea of drama, steeped as we are in a 'naturalist' tradition of mimetic action; their allegories' actions are not dictated by classical conventions but represent extensions of often complex externalizations of human, spiritual, and theological concepts. One could perhaps argue that their dramatic effect would thus have been more akin to the carvings of a cathedral tympanum.¹⁵ It is tempting to suggest, however, that the very formality and repetitiveness of the encounters of the Everyman figure with the allegorical vices and virtues may well have provoked laughter in the audience, despite the intentions of playwright or even performers. At the end of the *Jeu des sept pechié mortel et des sept vertus*,¹⁶ for instance, each sin is formally converted on stage by its corresponding virtue, quite literally so as, with characteristic parallelism, each formally exchanges costume and emblematic prop with its counterpart in an elaborately choreographed episode. It is tempting to suggest that in such oppositions, and especially in the elaborate *psychomachia* of the nine battle-scenes of *L'Homme juste et l'Homme mondain*, an audience might have been reminded of the popular satirical *Bataille de Caresme et de Charnage*, or the *Bataille d'Enfer et de Paradis*, that presented a similar *bellum intestinum*, albeit in a different vein. The intention may have been a serious one, but the audience response arguably not always so.

In the early religious morality plays, then, any humour arising directly from the allegorical figures may have been to some extent unintentional. In some of the later manifestations of the genre, however, there begin to appear more 'realistic' characters with a more obvious comic or satirical potential. One source

¹⁵ One could make a similar observation about the structure of many of the plays, whose combination of horizontal journey of life sequence and vertical structure of conflict and struggle is often expressed in the staging and spelled out in detail by a prologue figure before the action begins (cf. *Bien avisé Mal avisé*, *Les Blasphémateurs*); any traditional concept of 'plot', therefore, in the sense of a sequence of events involving unexpected developments or suspense, is anachronistic.

¹⁶ *Nativités moralités liégeoises du moyen âge*, ed. by Gustave Cohen (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1953), pp. 205–48.

of humour in these plays arises from the interplay of such 'everyday' characters with the more sober allegories they encounter. In the early sixteenth-century *Moralité des Enfants de Maintenant*,¹⁷ for example, a school play in which the prodigal's spiritual pilgrimage is transposed into a pedagogic context, the parents of the two protagonists are Maintenant, a baker by trade, and his wife Mignotte, their names, in the tradition of allegorical drama, denoting their contemporaneity as well as their over-indulgent attitude towards their children, Finet and Malduict. What strikes us here, and what must have produced at least a smile of recognition in the audience, is the human appeal of Maintenant and Mignotte when set against the mechanistic symmetry of the abstractions with which they engage. The couple appear to have stepped straight out of the more homely world of farce, in which ambitious parents put their witless offspring to school because they see in him a future pope.¹⁸ Mignotte — the name denotes the over-protective mother who mollycoddles her children — is reluctant when Bon Advis suggests they hand over their two boys to Instruction: 'Voulez-vous mes enfants destruyr / Que j'ai nourris si tendrement?' To which Bon Advis replies:

Dame, vous ne dictes pas bien;
Je n'entens pas qu'on les destruyse,
Mais je vous dy qu'on les instruyse
En science et en bonnes mœurs. (*ATF*, III, 10)

Later, when Instruction suggests possible careers for the two boys, Mignotte blithely retorts:

Nous voulissons tant seulement
Que ilz apprissent bien a lire
Et dedans tous livres escripre,
Et a parler grec et latin,
Et tout dedans lundy matin,
Et vous en aurez bon salaire. (*ATF*, III, 15)

Despite their prime function as exemplars of human tendencies towards good and evil, Finet and Malduict similarly provide a comic contrast with the grander abstractions in the play. Their obsession with dress is also exploited to comic ends here, whilst a ribald exchange in spoof Latin, following their graduation from the school of Jabien, reminds us that the *moralités* did not eschew the tradi-

¹⁷ *Ancien théâtre français*, ed. by A. de Montaiglon and E. Viollot Le Duc (Paris: P. Jannet, 1854), III, 5–86. (Cited hereafter as *ATF*.)

¹⁸ See Halina Lewicka, 'Histoire d'un thème dramatique: "l'enfant mis aux écoles"', in *Etudes sur l'ancienne farce française* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1974), pp. 32–46.

tional bawdy as a means of comic relief, and that they were not averse to incorporating other traditions of comedy and satire.¹⁹ Similar claims might be made for the little-known play of *Le Monde qui tourne le doz à Chascun* (1541) by Jean d'Abundance, where a lightly satirical portrayal of the family group of Chascun, his wife Chascune, and their only son enlivens a play in which the standard Prodigal Son scenario culminates in the apotheosis of the Last Judgement.²⁰ Little of this is riotously funny, perhaps, and is limited and sporadic, but this kind of insertion of the 'here-and-now' into an action that turns on loftier themes of man's eternal fate can be said to constitute one of the characteristics of comedy in the moralities, its focus on 'men of middling means' perhaps even harking back to classical models. The audience is both frightened and entertained by the spectacle of its own behaviour in a genre that at the same time verifies the fundamental Christian beliefs to which the play makes frequent allusion.

This thin dividing line between fear and pleasure that the *mystères* sometimes also exploit as a source of humour is similarly a feature of certain *moralités*, where laughter related to the ridiculing of evil is commonplace, particularly in the plays' depiction of Hell, a sort of 'monde à l'envers', mocked as a grotesque caricature of Paradise.²¹ This potential for humour is not always easy to detect in a play such as *Les Blasphémateurs du nom de Dieu*,²² where Hell ('plain de souffre et de venin') consists of several different *lieux*, where souls are variously tormented by being forced to eat snakes and toads, poached in cauldrons of boiling water, hanged and whipped on the gibbet, oven-roasted 'de tous costez', before being cast into the freezing waters of the river Acheron.²³ It seems reasonable to assume, however, that audiences were sometimes spurred to laugh at such elaborate depictions of evil precisely in order to liberate themselves from what Jean

¹⁹ ATF, III, 38–39.

²⁰ Jehan d'Abundance, *Le Monde qui tourne le doz a Chascun a vingt & deux personnages* (Lyon: Jacques Moderne, 1541). See A. Hindley, 'Une moralité peu connue de Jean d'Abundance: *Le Monde qui tourne le doz a Chascun*', in *Mainte belle œuvre faicte. Etudes sur le théâtre médiéval offertes à Graham A. Runnalls* (Orléans: Paradigme, 2005), pp. 207–21.

²¹ See the study by Jean Subrenat, 'La "Mesnie Lucifer": une société bestournée dans le théâtre religieux du XV^e siècle', in *Littérature et religion au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance*, ed. by Jean-Claude Vallecalle and others (Lyon: Presses de l'Université de Lyon, 1997), pp. 129–49.

²² See Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, II, 103–57.

²³ Alan E. Knight, 'Hell Scenes in the Morality Plays', in *Atti del IV^e Colloquio della Società internazionale pour l'étude du théâtre médiéval: Viterbo, July 1983* (Viterbo, 1984), pp. 203–13.

Frappier terms 'le terrorisme du diable'.²⁴ Such a 'rire libérateur' can be seen in the burlesque of the 'diableries' at the end of *L'Homme pecheur*, where the devils try to catch the sinner's soul as it emerges from his body, followed by their exaggerated frustrations as they *feront grans tonnoires et tormens sur lesdicts vices*; or in the parody of the infernal banquet as enacted in *Bien avisé Mal avisé*, where Hell is constructed *en maniere de cuisine comme cheuz ung seigneur* [. . .]. *Et la doit on faire grande tempeste*.²⁵ Sumptuous dishes are served by Satan, but the food is garnished with sulphur by the devils: *Adonc mettent grant habondance de souffre sur les plas et sur les gobeletz, tellement que quant ils boivent, il semble que tout brusle*.²⁶

In contrast to the massed forces of evil assembled here, Jean d'Abundance's smaller-scale *Le Monde qui tourne le doz a Chascun* will give Hell and the devil a sharper, more ironic focus: here, for instance, the forces of evil are limited to Belial and a single Diableton, who, following the closing *Procès de l'Homme*, are reduced to the function of unsuccessful lawyer and inept cleric, comically thwarted in their attempts to condemn Chascun to eternal damnation, only to be themselves cast down to where they belong, their impotence doubtless prompting shrieks of derision from the audience, as the two sink beneath sheaves of legal *paperasserie*.

It must be remembered, however, that the prime function of the devils in these plays was not to torment the dead but rather to tempt the living, to turn the *bien avisé* into the *mal avisé*. This is especially so in the *moralités*, which are essentially homocentric in nature, as Knight has pointed out, their aim being to underline, like the sermon, the need for the true Christian to be responsible for his own salvation, and to employ to good effect the free will that sometimes features as a personification (Liberté, Raison, Connaissance, Franc Arbitre), helping the hero to make his moral choices.²⁷ Indeed it is the scenes devoted to such temptations, in which the sinner character — Chascun, Monde, Humanité, Homme Pecheur — reveals his human weaknesses, that can be said to account for much of the humour in the 'comédie humaine' of the morality plays. These are not so

²⁴ Jean Frappier, 'Châtiments infernaux et peur du diable d'après quelques textes français du XIII^e et XIV^e siècles', in J. Frappier, *Histoire, mythes et symboles: Etudes de littérature française* (Geneva: Droz, 1976), pp. 129–36 (p. 133).

²⁵ Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, I, 98.

²⁶ Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, I, 100.

²⁷ Cf. Knight, *Aspects of Genre*, p. 24: 'sermons and morality plays were homocentric acts, by which the individual was taught the necessity for personal choice in determining his eternal destiny'.

much characters that symbolize man's place in the cosmos (such as Genre Humain of the *Moralité de Jhesucrist mis en prison* of the *Recueil Trepperel*),²⁸ as representatives of the newly emerging bourgeois class whose materialistic values many of these plays sought to combat.

There is space here for only a few examples, many of which involve the encounters between the Everyman figure and the various representations of the vices that he meets on his pilgrimage of life. Such confrontations often take place in the symbolic *locus* of the tavern, where the sins of the flesh are indulged, and where humour has a significant part to play. Some of the most appealing of these episodes occur in a group of plays based on the parable of the Prodigal Son in which erring humanity is introduced to the temptations of lust, gluttony, and other fleshly pleasures such as gambling and riotous living.²⁹ It is hard to see how spectators could have resisted the comic appeal of some of these scenes, either with the inner smile of self-recognition, or even with the unbridled laughter that suggests a failure to heed the lessons being taught via the 'ways of the world' being enacted before them. The gambling scenes are a good illustration of this, for not only do they inject a degree of realism into the action, but their very ludic nature generates some lively scenes in which stage-business plays a key part, sometimes involving violent squabbles and brawling — a common motif — as in *Les Blasphémateurs*, where the title-role tears up his cards in comic fury following an unsuccessful game at 'glic'.

In other plays the excesses of gambling are externalized by extensive business with costume, sometimes involving an abrupt shift from sartorial elegance to sudden nakedness.³⁰ A character's escalating sinfulness will lead on from gambling to more overtly sexual excess, as in *Les Enfants de Maintenant*, where Luxure clearly interprets the game of 'glic' in the same way as Cotgrave: 'to play fast and loose'. Similarly, in *L'Homme juste et L'Homme mondain*, scenes of

²⁸ *Le Recueil Trepperel: Fac-simile des trente-cinq pièces de l'original*, introd. by Eugénie Droz (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, [n.d.]), no. XVIII. Genre Humain introduces himself as follows: 'Ne vous soyez ebayssant / Se vieillart suis blanc et chennu: / Cinq mille ans a que suis tenu / En ceste grant captivité' (fol. A iiii').

²⁹ Cf. the anonymous *L'Enfant prodigue* and *Les Enfants de Maintenant*, and *Le Gouvert d'Humanité* by Jean d'Abondance. For a comparative study, see Jean-Claude Aubailly, 'Variations sur la Parole du Fils Prodigue à la fin du moyen âge', in *'Et c'est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble': Hommage à Jean Dufournet* (Paris: Champion, 1993), pp. 109–24.

³⁰ In *Bien avisé Mal avisé*, a character called Houllerie ('débauché') introduces Mal Advisé to gambling until he is finally stripped of his clothes and left to hide comically in the 'hayé epineuse' that divides the path of perdition from that of salvation.

sexual dalliance follow swiftly on from a card game, while other sins of the flesh such as eating and drinking may accompany the gaming, as in *L'Homme pecheur*, where Luxure orders a lavish dinner 'pendant qu'on jourra'.³¹ Such pleasures are seen as irresistible by the sinner character: struck for instance by the fleeting nature of his existence, Homme Mondain can only retort: 'Au moins souffrez que me soulace / En gayeté, car j'en ay envie.'³²

Such episodes as these bring us back to the paradox of our subtitle, 'the serious humour' of these plays, for they are dramatic in two ways: not only do they provide a clear framework for serious moral comment, but they also afford performers and playwrights an opportunity to enliven the action with physical business with props and costumes, stage violence, argument, and humour — a lively counterpoint to the more sober and lengthy allegorical exchanges. Of course, the laughter we extol as a desirable tonic was not necessarily regarded as such by medieval moralists; indeed such an activity is clearly condemned by the author of *L'Homme juste et L'Homme mondain* as yet another worldly pleasure to be avoided, featuring as it does in the advice given by La Chair to Homme Mondain:

Sans soucy se fault resveiller,
 Danser, jouer, faire bancquetz,
 Chanter, rire sans merveiller,
 Gaudir, parler a grans caquetz.³³

Oysance similarly advises Mal Advisé to shun honest labour and devote himself instead to 'rire', 'dancer', and 'chanter',³⁴ a point that is made in *Le Monde qui tourne le doz* by having the episodes of tavern activity presented largely as dumb-show, highlighted by instrumental *pausae* to accompany the dancing and singing.³⁵

It should perhaps be pointed out parenthetically at this point that humour arising from an ironic use of allegorical figures can be seen in certain satirical morality plays (albeit different in intent from the plays considered here) in which polemicists played on an audience's understanding of the traditional motifs.

³¹ See A. Hindley, 'Wheeling and Dealing: Motifs of Fortune and Gambling in the Old French *Moralités*', *European Medieval Drama*, 5 (2001), 135–49.

³² *L'Homme juste et L'Homme mondain*, in Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, I, 430.

³³ Quoted by Alan E. Knight, 'The Condemnation of Pleasure in Late Medieval French Morality Plays', *French Review*, 57 (1983), 1–9 (p. 4).

³⁴ *Bien avisé Mal avisé*, in Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, I, 22.

³⁵ *Le Monde qui tourne le doz*, fols 14–15.

Werner Helmich has described as ‘des pseudo-personnifications à clé individuelle’ such figures as l’Homme Obstiné of the *Moralité du Peuple Français*, part of Pierre Gringore’s carnival triple bill of 1512, in which a mixture of allegorical motifs and distinguishing personal traits left the audience in no doubt about whose side they should support in the territorial squabbles between Louis XII and Pope Julius II.³⁶ The pontiff’s bellicose nature, caricatured in l’Homme Obstiné, is roundly condemned by Pugnicion Divine, for the audience perhaps an echo of the figure of Justice as seen in many a *Procès de l’Homme*, but with the telling variation that there is here no counterbalancing figure of Misericorde to intercede on his behalf. An even more grotesque papal caricature can be seen in *Moralité de l’Estrif du Pourvu de l’Ordinaire et du Nommé*, staged in Toulouse in 1508, and sometimes attributed to André de la Vigne. Here the satirical attack upon Julius II is distinctly ad hominem in nature (indeed the papal legate Georges d’Amboise, as well as Louis XII himself, also come under fire in this play), employing a range of *procédés comiques* involving the use of jargon, costume, and stage-business in its often vicious censure of both monarch and pontiff on the question of the Pragmatic Sanction.³⁷ When the morality plays became a vehicle for religious polemics, allegory came to be used with an even sharper comic twist, notably in anti-Catholic entertainments such as *L’Eglise, Noblesse, et Povreté qui font la lessive*, performed by the Conards of Rouen at the 1541 carnival,³⁸ a play in which the two institutions of the title are virulently attacked by means of allegorical figures and the familiar use of the dramatized proverb. Let us not forget either the more subtle techniques of parody, as seen in a play like Nicolas de la Chesnaye’s *Condamnation de Banquet*, which, as Koopmans has demonstrated, treats the serious subject of the evils of gluttony by exploiting associations with other play-types such as the *mystère*, the carnival play, and the *morisque*.³⁹

³⁶ Cf. Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, III, p. xvi. See also Pierre Gringore: *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz et de Mere Sotte*, ed. by Alan Hindley (Paris: Champion, 2000), pp. 123–54.

³⁷ For the text of this play, see Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, III, 313–72. Hitherto known as *Le Nouveau Monde*, this play’s title and authorship have recently been thrown into question by Jelle Koopmans in his article ‘Du nouveau sur *le Nouveau Monde*’, in *Vita & Pensiero: Publications de l’Università del Sacro Cuore de Milan* (in press); I am grateful to Dr Koopmans for allowing me to consult the text of this article.

³⁸ See Beck, *Théâtre et propagande*, pp. 103–24.

³⁹ Nicolas de la Chesnaye: *La Condamnation de Banquet*, ed. by Jelle Koopmans and Paul Verhuyck (Geneva: Droz, 1990). See also Jelle Koopmans, ‘Une pièce parodique à trois codes

If we have digressed a little here, it is to remind us how these allusive variations on the traditional themes and motifs of the religious morality plays were able to be exploited at different periods in the genre's history and in different cultural circumstances. Nor, as we have already pointed out, should we overlook the essentially ludic nature of these plays. Though they may show humanity assailed by the sins we refer to as deadly, plays that presented an allegorical system that concretized the abstract were able to translate verbal moralizing into theatre that could also be distinctly lively. The distinctive use of costume and costume-change is a case in point: not just the grotesque garb of such characters as the ailments of *La Condamnation de Banquet*, dressed 'si estrangement que a paine peut on discerner si ce sont femmes ou hommes';⁴⁰ but also business with costumes that signal changes of attitude, as with the recalcitrant *Enfans de Maintenant*, excoriated for dressing like young men-about-town. Finet's progressive stripping by Luxure, bringing him ultimately via Honte to Perdition, traces a movement from hilarity to terror, as he is finally whipped mercilessly by Perdition and left dangling ominously from the gallows as a sobering reminder of the hard lessons of the drama. Such riches-to-rags progressions, with appropriate changes of tone, are depicted in *L'Homme juste et l'Homme mondain*: from the finery he wears high up on Fortune's wheel, we see Mondain in the grip of his passion for Luxure, uttering a flurry of declarations of love, leading to mutual undressing, culminating in our hero's breathless rejoinder, 'Si je y faulx, je puisse mourir. / Or ça, Luxure, je suys prest!'. Later Homme Mondain will be stripped yet again, this time in the context of gambling: now, without his finery, he has recourse to Avarice, Usury, and Simony; finally, he will be cast from the *rota Fortunae*, 'naked but for his chemise', and at the mercy of Fortune's sister, Adversity.

A degree of audience involvement might sometimes also comically enliven the action of a play whilst highlighting the serious underlying point. In Jazme Oliou's *La Moralité d'Argent* (Avignon c. 1450), a judgement play on the evils of money, L'Homme naturally prefers the counsel of Fort Despenseur to that of Bon Advis; in addition to such aristocratic accoutrements as a hunting dog and a falcon, L'Homme decides he would now like a wife, whereupon Argent *s'en va par la plasse tout seul charchant une amie a l'Ome*, to return, after a certain amount of business amongst the spectators no doubt, not with the pretty spouse

implicites: *La Moralité de la Condamnation de Banquet*, *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 18 (1991), 159–74.

⁴⁰ Nicolas de la Chesnaye: *La Condamnation de Banquet*, ed. by Koopmans and Verhuyck, p. 88.

that L'Homme is expecting, but with the hideous figure of La Terre (i.e. in this play, Death), who has appeared from *une trappe* beneath the stage, back into which L'Homme will be dragged at the end of the play, blindfolded, and dressed in his shroud. Yet another distinctive mixture of tones to highlight the moral of the drama.⁴¹

This spectacular entry of death onto the stage of the *Moralité d'Argent*, wearing a distinctive costume and by means of the *feinte* of the trap-door, enables Oliou to make the serious point about the universal presence of death at the same time as entertaining the audience with the comic reaction of L'Homme, who gets, not what he desires, but rather what he deserves. Humour with a flip side, so to speak, which can indeed sometimes seem 'austère', as Beck has defined it in the case of *Bien avisé Mal avisé*,⁴² provoking laughter which draws attention to its opposite in terms of those binary oppositions that so much infuse these plays — Good/Evil, Virtues/Vices, Heaven/Hell, Life/Death. Such contrasts are also apparent in the presentation of Death in the *moralités*, where the fear/delight antithesis is sometimes exploited comically in plays that show a marked affinity with the contemporary *Arts de bien mourir* that in similar ways taught how to prepare for death that could strike at any time. Indeed the depiction of Death in the *moralités* would itself provide a valid focus for a discussion of the 'serious' humour in these plays, particularly its relationship with the wider late medieval fascination with the macabre.⁴³ Such an enquiry would take us beyond the scope of the present study, however. Instead, we shall concentrate in the final part of this essay on the closely related theme of folly, and in particular on the frequently ambiguous nature of the fool's role in certain morality plays.

The grotesque presence of the 'fol-buffon', baring his arse at what appears to be a high emotional point in a performance of a lost play of *Sainte Apolline*,

⁴¹ *Moralité à sept personages: le Messager, Argent, Bon Advis, L'Homme, Fort Despenseur, Terre, Bien-et-Mal*, ed. by Paul Aebischer, in 'Moralité et farces des manuscrits Laurenziana-Ashburnham', *Archivum Romanicum*, 13 (1929), 448–518. L'Homme is terrified by La Terre's physical appearance, probably a mask: 'Tu es trop desfaicte: / Regarde ta teste!' (vv. 1099–1100); a stage-direction points out: *La Terre [...] doit ester de soubz l'eschadefauls et ne se monstre que la teste*.

⁴² Beck, 'La place de la moralité de *Bien Avisé Mal Avisé*', p. 19.

⁴³ The figure of La Mort appears in a number of plays; see for instance: *Le Lymon et la Terre, L'Homme pecheur, Le Monde qui tourne le doz* (Jehan d'Abundance), *La Condamnation de Banquet* (Nicolas de la Chesnaye), *Les Blasphémateurs, La Moralité de Charité, Les iiii Elements*. Its dramatic and moralizing functions certainly merit a separate study.

serves to remind us both of the importance of the theme of folly in the drama of the later Middle Ages, and of the decidedly ambiguous nature of the humour provided there by the fool — the Fol or the Sot.⁴⁴ His function, and that of the wider theme of folly in late medieval culture, has been discussed in a number of publications, including studies specifically focused on the *moralités*; however the subject merits further examination in the present context of the humour of the morality plays.⁴⁵

In many respects, the Fool's most obvious contribution in the moralities is to amuse and entertain the spectators, often at the beginning of a performance, rather in the manner of a stand-up comic or a warm-up artiste in a TV studio. His patter is thus frequently larded with verbal pyrotechnics (often hard to follow, it has to be said), as well as obscenities of all kinds — a reflection no doubt of the clownish madness of the natural fool, able to give vent to his baser instincts without fear of reprisal. One thinks for example of the entry of the fool in *Les Enfants de Maintenant*, playing on the words *paix/pet* to bring the audience to silence; or of the antics of his counterpart in Oliou's *Moralité d'Argent*, where the Fol appears to use his *marotte* like a ventriloquist's dummy, as a vehicle for extended bawdy. Indeed this opening 'turn' is the sole intervention of the fool in Oliou's play, a manuscript version of the text to which the role was added, perhaps specially for a performance before René d'Anjou.⁴⁶ It is an insertion that

⁴⁴ For a debate on Fouquet's Martyrdom of St Apollonia miniature, see the following: Gordon Kipling, 'Theatre as Subject and Object in Fouquet's "Martyrdom of St Apollonia"', *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1997), 26–80; Graham Runnalls, 'Jean Fouquet's "Martyrdom of St Apollonia" and the Medieval French Stage', *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1997), 81–100; Gordon Kipling, 'Fouquet, St Apollonia, and the Motives of the Miniaturist's Art: A Reply to Graham Runnalls', *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1997), 101–20. See also the recent study by Véronique Dominguez, 'La Scène et l'enluminure: L'Apolline de Jean Fouquet dans le livre d'Heures d'Etienne Chevalier', *Romania*, 122 (2004), 468–505.

⁴⁵ In addition to the studies referred to in the previous note, see also J. Lefebvre, *Les Fols et la folie: Etude sur les genres du comique et la création littéraire en Allemagne pendant la Renaissance* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968). On the fool in the *moralités*, see Margarete Newels, 'Le Fol dans les moralités du moyen âge', *Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Etudes Françaises*, 37 (1985), 23–38. On the folly/death relationship, cf. Claude Blum, 'La folie et la mort dans l'imaginaire collectif du moyen âge et du début de la Renaissance (XII^e–XVI^e siècles)', in *Death in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1983), pp. 258–85; and Blum, 'Le fou, personnage populaire dans les mystères et les miracles', in *Aspects du théâtre populaire en Europe au XVI^e siècle*, Actes du Colloque de la S.F.D.S., ed. by Madeleine Lazard (Paris: Centre National des Lettres, 1989), pp. 43–53.

⁴⁶ *Les Enfants de Maintenant*, ATF, III, 5–6; *Argent*, vv. 33–61, 'Moralité à sept personnages', ed. by Aebischer, p. 462.

reminds us of the peripheral role of the fool in certain mystery plays: *Sainte Barbe*, for example, where the simple rubric *stultus loquitur* marks his unscripted utterances; or in the *Saint Bernard de Menthon*, where he is employed as a device to bring the first 'journée' to a close.⁴⁷ The aim in these cases seems to be primarily to play to the gallery, as it were, *afin que le jeu soit moins fade et plus plaisans*, as a rubric in the *Miracles de Sainte Geneviève* puts it.⁴⁸

There was, however, more to the stage fool than simply to entertain or to serve as a kind of stage-manager to assist the movement of characters around the acting space. If in the *mystère* his function is as a bridge between the audience and the historical events being dramatized, it could be said that such a role was more important still in the didactic context of a *moralité* as a means of explaining the significance of the fictional action taking place before the spectators in terms of their own spiritual journey. In this way the fool acts as a counterpoint to the more formal expository figures that sometimes open and close a play, variously designated as L'Hermite (*Sept Pechiés Mortels*), Le Messagier (*Le Monde qui tourne*), Nuncius (*Argent*), Preco (*Les Frères de Maintenant*), Le Prescheur (*Le Mauvais riche*), Le Religieux (*Charité*), Le Docteur (*Moralité du Jour Saint Antoine*). To mark that high/low distinction, they may voice their message at a different linguistic register from these loftier authority figures, frequently in the form of proverbs or popular sayings. Jean d'Abundance's *Monde qui tourne le doz* concludes with consecutive speeches by the Sot and the Messenger; the latter will point up the message:

Le Monde n'est que damnement,
De promettre c'est sa coustume,
Au besoing vous laissez en torment,
Langoureux et plein d'amertume.
Mais les biens faictz a sauvement
Mainent Chascun a l'altitonne. (61^{vo})

The Sot, however, has reverted to his incorrigible folly, like the sinner who refuses to repent, and can only offer the audience his usual ribald prattle:

⁴⁷ See L. Petit de Julleville, *Les Mystères*, 2 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1880), II, 478–86, and pp. 488–91. In the *Moralité, Mystère et Figure de la Passion* by Jean d'Abundance, the part of the Sot is very much secondary, largely a device to facilitate the actors' movements; see D. H. Carnahan, *Jean d'Abundance: A Study of his Life and Three of his Works* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1909), pp. 49–123, cf. p. 71: 'Icy faut une passee de sot ce temps pendant qu'ilz vont devant Moyse'.

⁴⁸ Quoted by Mazouer, *Le Théâtre français du moyen âge*, p. 150, n. 2.

La goutte vobis!
 Vous entendez que je veulx dire?
 Je ne me puis tenir de rire!
 J'ay veu, je ne le diray pas.
 Si feray! La piece d'embas
 En riant me faisoit la moue.
 Se plus a moy elle se joue,
 Je luy donray ung coup de lance! (61^{vo})

Through much of the play, however, he hovers between the periphery of the action (he meaningfully choreographs the tavern carousing, for instance), and more direct involvement; it is he who officiates at the burial of Chascun (uttering, v. 1372, the sentence: 'Terre estoit, terre tournera'), just as he provides comments at other key points in Chascun's drama: his temptation, his illness, his death, and his rising on the Day of Judgement. It is the 'sot' who reminds Chascun of the fickleness of the ways of the world (Le Monde) uttering the proverb of our title 'Huy rire et puis demain pleurer' (v. 1110). Earlier *Maladie*, sent by La Mort, has reminded Chascun, in similar vein, of the imminence of his death — 'Telle huy rit qu'est demain morte' (v. 544) — making a clear connection between his folly and his demise. But Chascun has failed to heed, preferring to indulge in the sins of the flesh offered by Le Monde, and encouraged by the singing and dancing organized by the Fool, activities that are frequently associated with folly in these plays.

Similar associations between folly, sin, and death may be seen in another as yet unedited play, that of *Le Lymon et la Terre*,⁴⁹ a morality that illustrates well the sometimes grave humour of these texts and the range of dramatic possibilities afforded to dramatists by the ambiguity of the fool's role. The play traces the cradle-to-grave journey of Chascun, who, encouraged by le Fol, rejects the path of Reason, preferring instead the ways of sinful Monde. And since 'the wages of sin is death', it is precisely La Mort who will return him whence he came, to his legitimate parents Lymon and Terre, personifications evoked by Job 7. 13–16, on which the action of the play appears largely to be based. Le Fol first appears as a jester figure in the princely court of Monde, together with Luxure (his secretary), Avarice (his 'tresorier'), and Orgueil (his 'maistre d'ostel'), recruited there (probably from amongst the audience, a sign of the folly of the world), since as followers of Oysance, they will need someone to make them laugh:

Vez le cy ou tout droict s'en vient
 Asseoir icy decoste moy;

⁴⁹ *Le Recueil Trepperel*, vol. 1: *Les Sotties*, ed. by Droz, no. XIX.

Il nous dira je ne sçay quoy,
De quoy rirons par adventure.

Whereupon Le Fol entertains the assembled company with more opaque patter, in which anticlerical allusions might be said to hint at the darker side of fools, who according to the opening verse of Psalm 52, were evil because they knew no God. Indeed it is with the sinful nature of Chascun that Le Fol will largely be associated through the rest of the action: Le Monde's retinue established, the ubiquitous Fol will not only associate with the three vices, with all that that implies; he will also hover at the side of the naked Chascun, exhorting him to abandon Raison and live a little, pointing out to him (v. 522) 'Qu'ung fol conseille bien un saige', and that it is indeed possible to live without working. With the assistance of Liesse, he will organize the banquet that will highlight the uninhibited gaiety of the fool (jokes, business with props and costumes, asides to the audience,⁵⁰ song and dance), mingled paradoxically with the culpability of folly that is never far away. Finally, changing sides, he will chide Chascun for failing to realize 'Qu'au monde n'estoit qu'abus' (v. 1172). As Newels points out, the Raison/Fol duo here dramatically symbolizes that wisdom/folly opposition whereby 'la folie démente devient symbole de la déraison morale'.⁵¹ In the *memento mori* context of *Le Lymon et la Terre*, Le Fol fulfils a key role: in opposition to Reason, he can also accuse Chascun of folly precisely because he has refused to accept the redemption offered to him: a 'bouffon de cour' on one level, but with the capacity to tell the truth that the anonymous dramatist here exploits to good effect. To modern sensibilities such violent contrasts of tone may border on the sacrilegious: in Jean d'Abundance's *Moralité et figure sur la Passion*, (an allegorical figure of Christ's Passion, rather than an actual depiction of it), the crucifixion is immediately followed by the unscripted cavortings of the Sot, not just providing comic relief, but symbolizing eloquently the meaning of the crucifixion; as Blum puts it: 'Quel beau contraste que le Crucifié et ce Fol, l'Innocence et le Pêché, La Vie et la Mort dont le bouffon nous retrace les arabesques définitives et où se résumant, en une finale apparition, et le mystère de la Redemption et le sens de ce mystère.'⁵²

One of the best examples of this ambiguous function of the fool can be seen in the *Moralité des Enfans de Maintenant*, where the combination of popular

⁵⁰ Cf. Le Fol's appeal for a husband for Raison, vv. 931–41.

⁵¹ Newels, 'Le Fol dans les moralités', p. 32.

⁵² Blum, 'La folie et la mort dans l'imaginaire collectif', p. 278.

entertainer with the wise expositor of the folly of others is effectively conceived. From the very opening of the play, the Fol establishes a certain complicity with the spectators by means of his lewd tales, larded with scatological allusions and risqué jokes, all designed no doubt to appeal to an audience of pupils and parents whose boredom threshold may not have been particularly high. His patter certainly marks a sharp contrast with the high-flown utterances of such personifications as Bon Advis and Instruction. But the fool here is not just on the periphery of the action, commenting to the audience; he also at times engages with characters within the play in ways that are both meaningful and entertaining, helping to maintain a certain pace in an action that might otherwise tend to drag, showing Malduict, Finet, and the audience the ‘chemin à suivre’ — both literally and metaphorically. In the early stages of the play part of his practical function is to elaborate the pilgrimage metaphor, sometimes by filling in with his babble the spaces needed by the players to travel through the different stages of their journey. As the action unfolds, this clownish madness gives way to a sharper critical perspective on the behaviour of the two brothers, notably that of Finet who, at the high moral point of the action, is hanged on Perdition’s gallows in a manner that recalls the death of Judas as depicted in certain *mystères*. And it is precisely at this moment that the Fol turns into a preacher figure as he points up the penitential message:

Il s'estoit trop en eux fié,
Quant ilz luy promettoient du bien.
Estes vous telz, enfans Jabien,
Desespoir, Luxure et Honte? (*ATF*, III, 70)

The fool’s double significance here — both clown and critic — serves to remind us that beneath his distinctive cap and bells the Fol can also be a Sage, a notion probably derived, as Newels has pointed out,⁵³ from St Paul (1 Corinthians 1. 20–21, 27), on the holiness of the fool, who could be wiser than wisdom itself. It is this mix of comic jester and intelligent commentator that best explains the fool’s contribution in these plays to that ‘communion’ between players and spectators that is so distinctive a feature of medieval dramaturgy. As Henri Rey-Flaud has put it, his function is to:

Remettre sans cesse en question l’affabulation dramatisante, parodiant les moments capitaux de l’action, et travestissant les thèmes. Ainsi les spectateurs ne sont plus que

⁵³ Newels, ‘Le fol dans les moralités’, p. 23.

des 'voyants passifs' d'une action qui se déroule inexorablement et ne les concerne pas. Ils entrent en complicité avec le Fou et s'imbriquent dans la trame du drame.⁵⁴

This notion of the fool as both clown and critic is also to be seen in the *sotties*, of course, where it is satire that sometimes emerges from the criticism. The essential ethos there, however, is that of universal folly as demonstrated by a group of fools who are predominantly entertainers engaged in non-mimetic play. In the *moralités*, however, there is usually only one fool, but he has the crucial additional function of providing that extra dimension of commentary on characters engaged in an action in which he is often only tangentially involved. It is this apparent paradox of the fool's role in the morality plays that might be said to reflect the nature and wider function of the humour to be found there.

We must conclude, as we began, by recalling that genre divisions were indeed highly porous at the end of the Middle Ages and that what was seen on-stage would have been unlikely to raise in an audience's mind questions as to which genre the entertainment belonged. Yet the anachronism of 'genre' has dogged criticism of the *moralités*. Did they follow on from the tragedies of the ancient world, as some Renaissance theorists believed? Were they the ancestors of the humanist tragedies, as Lebègue suggested?⁵⁵ Or were they rather a 'genre mort-né' as Gustave Cohen defined them?⁵⁶ In the end, such questions do not get us very far because the morality plays, and particularly the *moralités religieuses*, *didactiques*, *édifiantes* — however one cares to label them — were a rather different animal. To see them in terms of *literary* genres is to miss the point, since they drew just as much from a different narrative tradition of exegetic and homiletic material, their episodes resembling rather the exempla with which medieval preachers studded their sermons.

There is much more to be said about this, of course,⁵⁷ but my point here is that the humour that is sometimes carefully incorporated into the morality plays is best understood if seen from this perspective. That preachers, whose

⁵⁴ Henri Rey-Flaud, *Le Cercle magique: essai sur le théâtre en rond à la fin du moyen âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 288.

⁵⁵ R. Lebègue, *La Tragédie religieuse en France, Les débuts: 1514–1573* (Paris: Champion, 1929).

⁵⁶ G. Cohen, *Théâtre français du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), p. 120.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, the study by Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L'Humour en chaire: le rire dans l'église médiévale* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994).

techniques are clearly apparent in the plays, used humour as an *amplificatio* to enliven their message is well known; witness Henri Estienne's criticism of the preacher Michel Menot's tendency to elaborate on the parables, to which he added 'toutes sortes de circonstances forgées à plaisir et couchées en termes propres pour faire rire'.⁵⁸ In other words late medieval sermons were not always any more uniformly serious than were the *moralités*. As Annelies J. Wirth has noted, humour had already been specifically sanctioned by such medieval sermon-manuals as the *Forma Praedicandi* (1322) of Robert de Basevorn, who specifically counsels what he calls 'opportune humour' as a suitable ornament for a sermon, the type of humour that occurs 'when we add something jocular which will give pleasure when the audience is bored' and to be used especially 'when they begin to sleep'.⁵⁹

Like the *moralités*, sermons were designed to appeal to a wide range of listeners, no doubt with different attention spans and intellectual capabilities. This point is made in *Bien avisé Mal avisé*, where it is pointed out that the layperson will not necessarily understand the finer theological points of a particular episode.⁶⁰ Richard of Thetford's treatise on the *Art of Amplifying Sermons* makes clear that the preacher should if necessary expand on his theme, using different 'examples' for sermons *ad clericos*, as opposed to sermons *ad populos*. Alexander of Ashby similarly advises 'sometimes to present a charming allegory and sometimes to tell a pleasant story (exemplum), so that the learned may savour the profundity of the allegory while the humble may profit from the lightness of the story'.⁶¹ One is immediately mindful of the episode in *L'Homme pecheur* where, faced by Maladie and Mort, Pecheur's balladic sermon, with its direct address to

⁵⁸ Henri Estienne, *Apologie pour Hérodote*, ed. by P. Ristelhuber (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969), ch. XXXI, p. 155.

⁵⁹ See Wirth, 'Dulcis et Utile', p. 17; also James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 269–355. It would have avoided the situation depicted in the *Moralité de Charité* (ATF, III, 337–424), where we learn from a conversation between Le Pouvre and L'Avaricieux that the latter has fallen asleep during the sermon.

⁶⁰ See Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, I, 42. In response to Bien Advisé's incomprehension following a theological discussion, Confession comments: 'Il souffit croire grossemment / A gens de rude entendement, / Car savoir ne povez / Les subtilitez de clergie.'

⁶¹ See Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, pp. 313 and 330.

the audience, is followed by an unscripted comic turn by Le Fol: *pour la pause, le Fol jourra a plaisance*.⁶²

It is not enough, however, to dismiss 'le comique' of the morality plays as mere comic relief: 'un moyen de faire avaler un peu de morale entre deux hoquets de rire, comme une pilule entre deux gorgées d'eau', as Gustave Cohen put it.⁶³ As I have shown, humour, laughter, has a more vital role to play in these still neglected plays, where it is exploited in a variety of ways by playwrights who display an often lively sense of theatre. Perhaps they were thereby enabled to explain more meaningfully those grand theological concepts that governed the religious life of their audiences, reducing them to dimensions that made them comprehensible and palatable in human terms, since, as we all know, 'le rire est le propre de l'homme'. In these dramatizations of the battle of Good versus Evil, the laughter of the spectator can no more conquer man's capacity to sin than it can crush the forces of evil that tempt him to do so. But perhaps it served as a reassurance that the means of salvation are within us all, provided we make the right choices.

⁶² Helmich, *Moralités françaises*, I, 261. What this might have involved is not clear, but in *La Condamnation de Banquet* we have a stage direction: *pause pour faire pisser le Fol*.

⁶³ G. Cohen, *Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre religieux français du moyen âge*, 2nd edn (Paris: Champion, 1951), p. 183.

‘SAINT AMADOUR ET SAINTE AFFLISE’: CALLING UPON THE SAINTS IN THE FABLIAUX

Anne Cobby

In 1989 Willem Noomen studied references to saints in the first three volumes, or twenty texts, of the *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fables*.¹ Far from merely filling lines and providing rhymes — though this they certainly do — he found them to be part of the professional arsenal of the fabliaux poets, used consciously for deliberate poetic aims.² Noomen’s article is a thorough and useful survey of the ways in which saints are used in narrative and discourse, referentially and connotatively, as actors, in their feasts and their shrines, for localization and characterization. He found identifiable motivation for many of the choices, whether in the saint’s life, legend and patronage, cult and locality, or the sound of his name. He started from the principle that we should attribute artistic skill to the fabliau poets here as in other aspects of their work, and that we should remember both the ubiquity of devotion in the Middle Ages and our own ignorance, particularly about local cults.

In this essay I aim to extend Noomen’s work, both by drawing upon the rest of the corpus, and by focusing on the role of saints’ names in the action and dynamic of individual texts. I shall attempt to uncover how calling upon the saints can express and advance the narrative or the interaction between characters, and

¹ *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fables* (NRCF), ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico Van den Boogaard, 10 vols (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983–98). All quotations are taken from this edition. Volume and text number are given for fabliaux. Reference to editorial material is by volume and page number.

² Willem Noomen, ‘A propos d’une ficelle de métier: noms de saints dans les fabliaux’, in *Miscellanea di studi in onore di Aurelio Roncaglia a cinquant’anni dalla sua laurea*, 4 vols (Modena: Mucchi editore, 1989), III, 913–32.

so contribute to the artistry and comedy of a fabliau. I shall analyse a very few texts, chosen for the different ways in which they exploit saints, but broader considerations will present themselves as sidelines. As in all other aspects of the fabliaux, aims, methods, and success vary considerably between individual texts, but a poet can make effective use of saints' names without his work generally being of high literary quality. In all the fabliaux I consider, invocation of the saints measurably enhances the text, be it through their identity or their placing. Without doubt, even in the texts I have considered, more remains to be found: the truth of Noomen's caveat has been proved repeatedly as I have chanced upon some aspect of the legend of an apparently insignificant saint which has cast new light upon his role in a fabliau.

The *NRCF*'s index of proper names includes eighty-five different names of saints. By 'saint' I mean a name identifiable as such in the index; that is, at least sometimes found with the word 'saint(e)' in the texts. Thus, in addition to personal names, I count 'saint(e) Esperit(e)', 'sainte Trinité', 'saint Sauveur', 'sainte Croix', 'sainte Patenostre',³ for the manner of their citation ('par saint X', 'foi que doi saint X') assimilates them to canonized saints. God, Jesus Christ, and All Saints are not counted, though they often enter into my discussion of named saints. Oaths, prayers, pilgrimages, and feasts are not distinguished in this count. 'Notre Dame' is not counted separately from '(sainte) Marie', nor are homonymic saints distinguished, lest we beg questions. The number of texts mentioning (in at least one manuscript) one or more saints in the sense outlined is seventy-nine. What is more remarkable is that forty-eight texts, over a third of the corpus, make no reference to saints at all.⁴ The texts which do contain them have between one and eighteen. Individual saints feature in between one and

³ Jacques E. Merceron, 'Paternoster et patenostre: de la liturgie à la sanctification érotique', *Romania*, 120 (2002), 132–48, studies this obviously fictitious 'saint' in the fabliaux and elsewhere, and argues for an erotic sense. In fact the six fabliau instances show two very different uses: erotic indeed in *Cele qui fu foutue et desfoutue* (*NRCF*, IV/30), v. D41, *La Damoiselle qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre I* (*NRCF*, IV/26), v. 51, and, less immediately, *Le Bouchier d'Abeville* (*NRCF*, III/18), v. 426, but religious in *Le Povre Mercier* (*NRCF*, VIII/97), v. 95, *La Vescie a Prestre* (*NRCF*, X/127), v. 269, and *Le Vilain qui conquist Paradis par Plait* (*NRCF*, VI/39), v. 33, where variants suggest a desire to avoid the name, maybe because of the erotic overtones.

⁴ *NRCF*, III/14, 19–20; IV/22–23, 25, 27, 29, 35–36; V/42, 46, 48–50, 53; VI/58, 61–62, 70, 72–73; VII/75–77, 82; VIII/84–89, 92, 95–96, 98–99, 101; IX/104–05, 108–09, 113; X/118–20, 123, 126. The groups of adjacent texts might suggest that certain manuscripts avoid saints, but this does not seem to be the case.

twenty-one texts; rarely-named saints are often found together in one text, while if a text has only one saint it is generally a common one.⁵

Few names are used in the fabliaux both for saints and for characters, but those that are are often illuminating. Two such names are Martin and Simon. In *Les Quatre souhaits saint Martin* (NRCF, IV/31) the overlap between actor's name and saint's name is striking, for the actor is the saint, and the saint enters the story by being invoked. A peasant prays, and St Martin appears to him:

'Saint Martin, dist il, hez avant!'
Lors li vint saint Martins devant. (vv. 13–14)

So reads the critical text of the NRCF, with a note that the peasant is addressing his oxen.⁶ The editors reject as implausible the reading of MS A, 'Saint Martin, dist il, or avant'; but is it so inadmissible? The peasant has a great devotion, bordering on obsession, to St Martin, who is mentioned six times in the first fourteen lines (vv. 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14). If he were intending to stir his saint to action and was then taken aback by his success, it would not be the only case of religious literalism in the fabliaux.⁷ Even in this text with its focus on a single saint, we see a calculated effect: where often invocation of the saints is liberal and may seem to be random, here one saint only is called upon, repeatedly, and to unusually tangible effect.⁸

A less saintly Martin appears in *Le Chapelain* (NRCF, IV/60). Almost all the characters are named in this fabliau, even the priest, 'prestre Martin, un fol prové' (v. 7). To name the priest at all is quite unusual in the fabliaux; to give him (repeatedly) this epithet is unique. A clue to the significance of his name is that the text also uses it as a saint's name. Two fishermen catch a sack which they think contains clothes, but which actually contains the priest's corpse; they swear by Martin (vv. 177, 215), Peter (v. 157), and Fatué (v. 172).⁹ They dispute

⁵ Forty-four saints are cited in one text; Peter in twenty-one. Nicasius is the only case of a single-text saint in a single-saint text (NRCF, X/121, v. 85), and he is local.

⁶ NRCF, IV, 403.

⁷ See for instance *Le Povre Mercier* (NRCF, VIII/97).

⁸ I disregard the invocation of Giles in the independent appendix in MS Z (cf. NRCF, IV, 410).

⁹ Neither the NRCF nor any of several hagiographical sources throw any light on this name. For identifying the saints of the fabliaux and their attributes, the following have been useful: Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, 3 vols in 6 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955–59), vol. III: *Iconographie des saints* (1958–59); *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina*

ownership of the clothes, accusing each other of having stolen them and put the corpse in their place. The strange concern with clothes rather than with the corpse is reflected in the invocation of the saint who gave half his cloak to a beggar,¹⁰ and the link is strengthened by the use of the same name for the priest, and that in an unusual form.

Simon is altogether a more complex case. Characters are called Simon in *Sire Hain et dame Anieuse*, *La Bourse pleine de sens*, *Frere Denise*, and *La Vescie a Prestre*. A saint Simon is named in *Le Chevalier qui fist sa Fame confesse*, *La Damoiselle qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre*, *Le Meunier d'Arleux*, *Le Prestre et Alison*, *Le Sacristain II*, and *Trubert*.

Le Chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse (NRCF, IV/33), in which a husband disguises himself to hear his wife's confession, mentions God repeatedly as part of its quasi-pious discourse, but there is only one saint, Simon:

‘Mes m'en estoie aperceüe,
Quant je vous en enquis sordoïs
En ce que dis par mon gaboïs.
Mout me poise, par saint Symon,
Que ne vous pris au chaperon
Et que ne vous deschirai tout!’ (vv. 268–73)

This comes at a moment of deception and counter-deception. The wife has just learnt that her husband has tricked her into confessing adultery to him, and now claims that she recognized him and lied. According to the NRCF ‘saint Symon’ is the apostle Simon the Zealot, brother of Jude (who is absent from the fabliaux).¹¹ But there is another candidate. Of the six oaths by St Simon in the fabliaux, two are in contexts of systematic deceit or impersonation: here, and in *La Damoiselle qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre* (NRCF, IV/26; MS D, a third

Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis, 2 vols (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1898–1901); *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, 15 vols (Rome: Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontifica Università lateranense, 1961–2000); Pierre Rézeau, *Les Prières aux saints en français à la fin du Moyen Âge*, 2 vols, Publications romanes et françaises, 163, 166 (Geneva: Droz, 1982–83). The first of Rézeau's texts, a collection of prayers in order of the liturgical calendar, provides an invaluable compendium of the best-known saints and their patronages, so I cite it in spite of its late date (1488); cf. Rézeau's characterization of this text as ‘un microcosme suggestif d'une forme de la piété médiévale’ (I (1982), 30). See also Pierre Rézeau, ‘Les prières en français adressées aux saints dans les livres d'heures du XIV^e au XV^e siècle’, in *La Prière au moyen-âge: littérature et civilisation* (Aix-en-Provence: CUER MA, 1981), pp. 431–47.

¹⁰ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 900.

¹¹ NRCF, IV, 445.

version with no critical edition, v. 156), as the girl's body is being explored by her seducer under cover of euphemism. In two more the sale or barter of women's bodies is the topic; in *Le Meunier d'Arleux* (NRCF, IX/110):

'Sire, dist il, par saint Simon,
Car faites un markiet a mi.
Certes j'ai un porchiel nourri,
Il a passé cinc mois entiers;
Celui avrés molt volentiers,
Foi ke doi Diu, sainte Marie,
Se jesir puis o le meschine.' (vv. 194–200)

and *Le Prestre et Alison* (NRCF, VIII/91):

'Avez vos l'avoir aporté
Que vos devez doner ma fille?
—Dame, ne sui pas ci por guile!
J'ai les garnemenz apportez:
Veez les ci! Or esgardez,
Quar il sont et bel et plaisant!
Vos me tenroiz a voir disant,
Ainz que parte de vo maison.
Foi que ge doi a seint Simon,
Ge n'amai onques a trichier.'
Lors rue sor un eschequier
Quinze livres d'esterlins blans. (vv. 264–75)

In *Le Sacristain II* (NRCF, VII/74, v. B364) the name is a line-filler and rhyme-provider, but the action of the fabliau starts with an attempt to buy a woman's body. The remaining case is in *Trubert* (NRCF, X/124, v. 1911), a tale whose very theme is impersonation. I leave this long and complex text out of consideration altogether, for it deserves more attention than I can give it here, and it is at best an atypical fabliau. It would reward separate study, for it is long enough to have many saints (fifteen), and many who occur in only two texts make one of their appearances in *Trubert*.

So Simon is invoked in contexts of deceit or impersonation, and of human traffic. We find the same features around some of the characters with this name. Two of the four are not, I think, significant: *Sire Hain et dame Anieuse* (NRCF, II/5) and *La Bourse pleine de sens* (NRCF, II/8). The other two, *Frere Denise* and *La Vescie a Prestre* are, for they combine religion (or religiosity) with deceit and lust, or deceit and greed: the same motives as accompany the saints called Simon.

In *Frere Denise* a pious girl enters religious life disguised as a man, only to be seduced by her recruiter Simon, 'qui la damoizele enchanta' (NRCF, VI/56,

v. 36).¹² In *La Vescie a Prestre* (NRCF, XI/127) a grasping friar Simon and his brethren extract a legacy from a dying priest by promising to pray for his soul. Like those who swear by St Simon, these men deceive, traffic in human beings, use religion for gain. All of this suggests not so much Simon the Zealot as Simon Magus (the magician, the enchanter). Though no saint, he was well known in the Middle Ages and closely associated with Simon Peter.¹³ In Acts 8 he attempts to buy Peter's spiritual powers, so giving his name to the sin of simony, the traffic in spiritual goods. In the Golden Legend, his magic expresses itself in impersonation and changing appearance, his own or others'. It is surely this Simon who is called upon to support, and whose namesakes practise, impersonation, deceit either spiritual or systematic, or the sale of what should not be bought.

The names Martin and Simon, then, whether of saints or of characters, are demonstrably not chosen at random. *Le Prestre et Alison* is a good example of a text which has a fairly large number of saints (six, plus two not explicitly named), with more or less individual aptness but with careful timing, for they are focused on the two themes of money and trickery.

The fabliau tells how Mahaut's young daughter Marion is desired by the priest Alixandre, who offers money to sleep with her; Mahaut pays the prostitute Alison to impersonate Marion, and the priest is discovered and beaten when the servant Hercelot shouts 'fire!'. The women swear to support their deceit: Mahaut refuses 'par les sainz c'on quiert a Gisor' (v. 110) — Gervase and Protase¹⁴ — to take Alixandre's bribe for her daughter, by God and 'le cors saint Huitasse' (v. 137) that she will entrap him, and by St Denis that she has found a husband for Alison (v. 149). Denis is frequent, but the others occur nowhere else (except Gervase in *Trubert*). 'Le cors saint Huitace' is also used in the narrator's voice (v. 3). Brian Levy points out that St Eustace was martyred in a cauldron of boiling water, and Mahaut vows to catch Alixandre like a fish, and begins by giving Alison a bath.¹⁵ Hercelot swears by St Peter as she goes to trick the priest (v. 214), by St George as she welcomes him to the house (v. 322). Peter is

¹² Cf. Brian J. Levy, *The Comic Text: Patterns and Images in the Old French Fabliaux*, Faux Titre, 186 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), p. 175, and Anne Berthelot, 'Anti-miracle et anti-fabliau: la subversion des genres', *Romania*, 106 (1985), 399–419 (p. 404), both of whom comment on his diabolical associations.

¹³ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.3, 1225; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), I, 341–44, II, 325–29.

¹⁴ NRCF, VIII, 370.

¹⁵ Levy, *Comic Text*, p. 155.

common; George is rare (two other fabliaux: *NRCF*, VI/51 and X/122). The poet finds names of all kinds useful in his search for easy or impressive rhymes (cf. vv. 7–8, 9–10, 13–14, 27–28, 33–34, 213–14, the last four all equivocal); both Peter and George provide convenient rhymes, in the case of Peter an equivocal rhyme which gives a good flavour of the poem's stylistic quality:

A tant s'en ist par un degré
De la maison, qui fu de pierre,
Et va jurant Dieus et saint Pierre. (vv. 212–14)

Most of the women's saints seem to have no specific relevance, but their being restricted to the speakers' guiding principle, deceit, motivates them in a different way. The priest for his part swears in relation to money and sex, and his saints are well chosen. We have seen that he invokes St Simon when offering money for something which should not be bought, Marion's body. He also swears by St Lawrence:

'Tien, Hercelot, ceste aumosniere,
Fait li prestres, ci a dedenz
Vint sous ou plus, par seint Loran!
S'achate un bon pliçon d'aigneaus.
Et g'irai faire mes aviaus
A celi qu'ai tant desirree.' (vv. 344–49)

The priest is about to meet his ruin through fire; St Lawrence was roasted on a gridiron.¹⁶

So *Le Prestre et Alison*, though not an accomplished text, shows the two main ways in which saints can be used for artistic effect: Simon, Lawrence, and Eustace are chosen for their identity, whereas others serve to underline the guiding passions of the speakers and the themes of the fabliau. At the same time, here as everywhere, they are useful for rhyme.

Le Sacristain (*NRCF*, VII/74) allows us to compare the use of saints in three versions of one tale. Version III has only one, John, which is also the name of the poet. Version I has four, none of which is frequent in the fabliaux: Anthony and Leger are found only in this text, Hilary only here and in *Trubert*, Vincent in three other texts.¹⁷ This version has no other personal names or place names. Version II has sixteen saints and makes skilful use of names and naming for its characters.¹⁸ Most of its saints are common, but four are unique in the fabliaux.

¹⁶ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 789. Otherwise only in *Trubert*.

¹⁷ *NRCF*, III/18, IV/37a, X/122.

¹⁸ See Anne Cobby, 'Jeux d'onomastique dans *Estormi*, *Le Sacristain* et leurs analogues', *Reinardus*, 17 (2004), 39–59.

No saint appears in more than one version. All three tell how a sacristan tries to buy a faithful wife's favours; she colludes with her husband to take his money, but the husband kills him; the corpse is then moved from one hiding place to another and discovered by a variety of persons.

The single saint in *Le Sacristain* III is extremely apt. A servant refuses to go to work until he has had a good breakfast, unlike John the Baptist in his frugal life in the wilderness (Matthew 3, Mark 1):

'Dame, dist il, par saint Johan,
Ja de pain sec ne mangerai,
Ne de ceans ne mouverai
Jusqu'a tant que m'arez donnee
Du bacon une charbonnee.' (vv. 497–501)

Le Sacristain I has few invocations, rare saints, and no other names, but its saints are carefully chosen. Two of the saints are invoked by the sacristan as he offers money to the woman:

Li secretains la vit mout bele;
Au cuer li point une estincele
Ki li fait muer sa coulour.
Or est entrés en tele error
Dont il n'istra pas de legier!
'Dame, fait il, par saint Ligier,
Se jou puis vostre amor avoir,
Tant vous donrai de mon avoir,
Ke plus i avra de cent livres.' (vv. 49–57)

Et il li dist: 'Ma douce amie,
Par mon orde de saint Vincent,
Livres i ara plus de cent.' (vv. 130–32)

As in *Le Prestre et Alison*, the oaths express the crux of the plot and the sacristan's driving passion. The *NRCF* editors use these saints to locate the action of the fabliau,¹⁹ but more to the point associations of good living attach to both saints. Leger is the patron of the obese, by pun on *léger*, the rhyme word here; Vincent of winegrowers, by pun on *vin*.²⁰ Is the sacristan's 'order' perhaps dedicated to wine? Leger is also invoked for eye diseases,²¹ and we have just heard how the

¹⁹ *NRCF*, VII, 353.

²⁰ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 797, III.3, 1326; Rézeau, *Prières aux saints*, I, 34, 53.

²¹ Rézeau, *Prières aux saints*, I, 46, 66.

sacristan sees the woman and is led astray. The other two saints are named by those who find the corpse where they expected to find a ham: 'Jou te dirai, par saint Ylaire!' (v. 358), 'Aïe, Dius et saint Antoine!' (v. 412). Hilary, a protector against snakes, has no obvious relevance beyond providing the rhyme, but Anthony certainly has, for St Anthony Abbot is the patron both of gravediggers and of pork butchers.²²

Le Sacristain I, then, makes careful use of a few significant saints. *Le Sacristain* II uses many more; sometimes their identity is significant, and the patterns of invocation, highlighting moments of crisis and heightening parallel events, fit well into the poet's skilful narration. Most of the oaths are concentrated around the dead sacristan: Paul (v. 333), when the husband Guillaume kills him (extended in MS *B* by reference to Simon, v. 364); then when the corpse is found by the prior ('le seint Esperit', v. 448),²³ by Guillaume's wife Ydoine (Omer, v. 484), by the maid Cortoise (Leonard, v. 625), by the thief Garnot who is accused of killing him ('toz sainz', v. 637, with a variant Nicholas, v. B688), by the lodger Martin (Martin, v. 736); when it is taken away by Garnot (Denis, v. 649), by Martin (Clement, v. 762); when Guillaume buries it and finds the ham (Lot or Leu, v. 554 and variants) and brings the ham home (Germanus, v. 570). In all these cases calling upon the saints expresses heightened emotions, and the recurring oaths mark the stages in the unfolding of the plot. The other context is the sacristan's attempt to seduce Ydoine: they meet when she goes to church to pray to 'le filz seinte Marie' (v. 90), and again at the altar of St Martin (vv. 198, 244); when they make their assignation, he swears by 'Dieu omnipotent' (v. 266). Other manuscripts have 'Omont' (v. B280) and 'Tiecle' (v. d272) here; these last two are unique in the fabliaux, as are Leonard, Lot, and the surely erroneous variant 'par sainte Gonne' (d134, elsewhere 'par nostre gone', v. 128 of the critical text), which betrays the automatism whereby saints can slip in wherever assertion is emphasized.

The common saints in *Le Sacristain* II — Denis, Germanus, Mary, Martin, Paul — are less interesting than the uncommon. In every case these common saints are at the rhyme. Martin is invoked as patron by the boy Martin, providing both rhyme and personal aptness. Guillaume's swearing by St Paul before killing the sacristan with a blow to the head is perhaps an allusion to the apostle's

²² Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 647, III.1, 103.

²³ Of the sixteen references to the Holy Spirit in the corpus, six have the definite article, but the ten without justify including it in a discussion of saints.

decapitation.²⁴ Germanus is frequent in the fabliaux, but in spite of their vast cults, Nicholas is relatively uncommon (seven cases)²⁵ and Leonard found only here. All three saints protect prisoners, so they are suitable for one of the rare fabliaux where murder is committed.²⁶ Leonard rhymes here with ‘hart’, ‘rope’, to strengthen the reference to this patronage, established both by his legend and as a pun on the element ‘lien’ in his name.²⁷ Cortoise swears by him when she finds that what she took to be a ham is in fact the dead sacristan. This suggests several more of his patronages: livestock, the obese (*le mal saint Léonard*), the insane.²⁸ As in version I, eyesight is important in this story whose twists and turns depend on mistaking a corpse for other things in the dark, and two saints specialize in sight problems. St Omer is referred to at an early moment of confusion, when the dead sacristan seems to knock at Ydoine’s door:²⁹

Dit Ydoine: ‘Par seint Homer,
Sire Guillaume, levez sus!
Il a ne sai qui a nostre hus:
Molt nos a anuit agaitiez.’ (vv. 484–87)

Lot and Leu occur as variants (three manuscripts Lot, one Leu; Lot is in no other fabliau, Leu in two):³⁰

Ce dit Guillaumes: ‘Tot por voir,
Ci a autre moine noir,
Qui molt nerçoie, ce me sanble!
Or les metrai endeus ensanble.’
Faire le volt, mais il ne pot:
‘Qu’est ce, por le baron seint Lot?’

²⁴ Réau, *Iconographie de l’art chrétien*, III.3, 1037; cf. Noomen, ‘A propos d’une ficelle de métier’, p. 923.

²⁵ *NRCF* I/4, II/7, IV/26b, VIII/79, VIII/80, IX/103.

²⁶ Réau, *Iconographie de l’art chrétien*, III.2, 976, 980, 799–800; Régine Pernoud, *Les Saints au Moyen Âge: la sainteté d’hier est-elle pour aujourd’hui?* (Paris: Plon, 1984), p. 327.

²⁷ Jacques E. Merceron, ‘Prélude aux sermons joyeux: l’équivoque hagiographique et la sanctification facétieuse du XIII^e au XV^e siècle’, *Le Moyen Âge*, 103 (1997), 527–44 (p. 534), and more generally on the ‘pharmacopée phonétique’ or ‘homéopathie phonétique’ (p. 531) of medieval saints.

²⁸ Réau, *Iconographie de l’art chrétien*, III.2, 800.

²⁹ Found in five other fabliaux (*NRCF*, II/10, III/18, IV/34b, VII/80, VIII/93); Réau, *Iconographie de l’art chrétien*, III.2, 1007.

³⁰ *NRCF*, II/5, II/12.

Voit Guillaumes qu'il ne porra:
 Lors se porpense qu'il verra
 Quel moine c'est qui est tué. (vv. 549–57)

Vision, and confused vision, are clearly an immediate theme here, and St Lo of Coutances was effective against eye disease.³¹ MS *d* reads, 'mais il ne puet / Qu'es ce pour le baron saint Leu'. The *NRCF* editors suggest that 'Lot' may be a graphic variant of 'Leu' (Lupus).³² But St Lo is a highly suitable patron, and the change of rhyme word from *pot* to *puet* is enough to explain Leu. On the other hand, Lupus too provides an appropriate patronage: of the several saints of this name, more than one is associated with insanity.³³ Either saint has thus a claim to be original in this tale of confusion and engineered delusion and in a passage where identity is in question. The other two unique saints, only in variants and at the same place (v. 266 of the critical edition), are probably also dictated by changes in rhyme: Omont and Thecla.³⁴ It is possible that the sacristan's reference to Thecla, a chaste martyr, is ironic;³⁵ for Omont the *NRCF* editors propose Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury.³⁶

Versions I and II of *Le Sacristain* thus provide an interesting contrast in their exploitation of saints, the former using few but with clear intent, while the latter's much larger group are either rare and with relevant gifts, or common but for the most part of less obvious significance, while both types are carefully positioned in the narrative. The same story calls for saints with the same gifts, but the two versions choose different saints: in version I Leger for obesity and faulty eyesight, in version II Leonard for obesity, Lo and Omer for sight, Leonard and Lupus for delusion.

My remaining text, *Le Prestre et le Chevalier* (*NRCF*, IX/103), has the largest number of saints' names of any fabliau (not excepting *Trubert*): eighteen. Partly this can be explained by its length: at 1356 lines it is the longest except *Trubert*. A knight strikes a bargain with a priest whereby he will receive any dish he likes for five *sous*. The priest exploits the bargain by charging not only for every dish but for every ingredient and every service. The knight's revenge consists in

³¹ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 812.

³² *NRCF*, VII, 413.

³³ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 825–26; *NRCF*, II, 421.

³⁴ Cf. *NRCF*, VII, 363.

³⁵ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.3, 1250.

³⁶ *NRCF*, VII, 414; Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 1013. Cf. note 45 below.

demanding sexual service from the priest's niece, his mistress, and finally the priest himself, who accepts defeat, pays him to desist and vows to reform his life. The fabliau names three of its protagonists, the priest and the women, and has sixteen place names, the second highest count in the corpus.³⁷ The places in *Le Prestre et le Chevalier* are of three kinds: in the name of the author, Milon d'Amiens, in metaphorical or comparative uses (vv. 58, 430–32, 1141–42), or as extensions of saints' names. Curiously, the form 'Saint (name) of (place)' is found in only one other fabliau.³⁸ Seven of our text's eighteen saints are found nowhere else. Several of them are of dubious identification — about half the total of such saints in the corpus, if we read the *NRCF* gloss with a critical eye. References to saints are often grouped, or combined with references to God. Of the three character names, two are from the small group which are also used for saints: Silvestre and Gille, here a female name — and St Giles is sworn by. The third, Avinee, is indubitably a pun. The great variety of saints (and of places) reads like deliberate virtuosity; the unusual pairing or multiplying of saints calls the whole of heaven to witness; and the extension by toponym calls attention to the invocation and makes it more solemn. Because saints are paired, a lower proportion is at the rhyme than in most fabliaux, so their choice is less constrained. All in all the choice and placing of saints are as carefully controlled as the rest of Milon's work.

First, the attribution of saint to speaker shows clear patterns. The knight invokes Lazarus of Avalon, Mary and God (vv. 24–25), all the saints of France (v. 217), 'Aliste de Hanstone' (v. 554), Gertrude of Nivelles (v. 723), 'sainte Otrise et [. . .] saint Floire' (v. 1161). The priest calls upon 'saint Amadour et sainte Afflise' (v. 585), Julian of Brioude (v. 599),³⁹ 'Valiier' (v. 619), Giles (v. 715), 'Diu le fil Marie' (v. 751), all the saints of Rome, Paul, and Peter (vv. 1249–50), James and Martin (v. 1258), Nicholas (v. 1338). Several of these saints are of tentative or dubious identification, as we shall see. Avinee uses Martin, 'Dieu le fil sainte Marie' (v. 961), 'tout li corsaint qui sont a Romme' (v. 989), 'Diu [. . .] et sainte Esperite' (v. 1220). Gille has 'Dieu le fil sainte Marie' (v. 677), the squire Lambert and God (v. 40) and the Holy Spirit (v. 1069). God on his own is invoked by everyone. The number of seemingly fictitious or obscure saints is striking, and already suggests what analysis will show: while patronage is important for some

³⁷ Exceeded only by *La Bourse pleine de sens* (*NRCF*, 11/8).

³⁸ 'Seint Huidevert de Gournai', in *Les Trois Dames qui troverent l'anel I* (*NRCF*, 11/11), v. 47.

³⁹ MS 'Bieure'; see *NRCF*, 1X, 293.

saints, for others it is rather the sound of their names. Above all there is significant interplay between saint, speaker, and circumstance.

First, the knight and the squire are in need, cold and wet on the road. The knight calls upon the highest powers and the patron saint of beggars: 'Dieu et saint Ladre d'Avalon / Reclama, et sainte Marie' (vv. 24–25).⁴⁰ A little later the squire prays to 'Dieu et saint Lambert' (v. 40) — a local saint, and one who was kept miraculously warm when outside on a cold night.⁴¹ Both Lazarus and Lambert are rare: Lazarus in one other text (*NRCF*, IV/21), Lambert in two (*NRCF*, III/18 and X/124). The knight greets the priest politely, scattering God-formulae in his talk (vv. 137, 153, 181, and later, vv. 263, 343); the priest does not. The knight agrees to the bargain 'par tous les sains qui sont en France' (v. 217) — a solemn oath, and a rhyme with *couvenanche*, 'bargain', a key word. Then there are no saints for a long time, until the knight begins to take his revenge and sends for the priest's niece Gille, when he brings together the crucial concepts of money and the bargain, and 'Aliste de Hanstone':

'Alés, dites, je n'en prendroie
Dis livres de tele monnoie,
Par saint Aliste de Hanstone!
Puis que couvens a moi le donne!' (vv. 552–55)

This is a unique and possibly fictitious saint, and the toponym extends the oath into a full line; coupled with a saint who is at best obscure, this makes the knight's words more intimidating. The *NRCF* editors propose Northampton for 'Hanstone' and suggest a reference to the Count of Senlis (Saint Liz) who founded a priory there;⁴² but another possibility is Alice, sister of Edmund of Abingdon, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose convent in Northamptonshire became a pilgrimage centre in her brother's honour after his death in 1240.⁴³ If this is so, the knight is calling a holy nun to witness his determination to deflower the priest's niece.

Intimidating too is the knight's second demand, for Avinee, as reported by the squire:

'Si envoiés dame Avinee,
La preus, la courtoise, la biele:

⁴⁰ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 794.

⁴¹ Rézeau, *Prières aux saints*, I, 64–65.

⁴² *NRCF*, IX, 293.

⁴³ David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 423–24. I am grateful to Philip Bennett for this suggestion.

Par sainte Gietrus de Nivelles
Jure mes sires qu'il le veut!' (vv. 721–24)

This is a real saint and another nun, but one unique in the fabliaux (again local), and the oath fills the whole line. There is a long gap until the third demand, which finally gives the knight dominance over the priest:

'Par sainte Otrise et par saint Floire,
Fait li chevaliers, je n'ai cuer
Que le cuitaise a nesun fuer
Por dis livres: mais va arriere!
Que Dius maudie vostre chiere!' (vv. 1161–65)

Again, the oath is juxtaposed with a reference to money, the bone of contention. These saints are identified only tentatively by the *NRCF*, as Ostrythe of Mercia and a third-century Florius or Florus.⁴⁴ When he was in distress the knight called upon powerful saints, but now he is in control he uses obscure or fictitious saints to assert his own power. His use of God's name too has changed: this is no polite formula.

The priest shows a comparable pattern. He starts by calling upon God, but in no politeness or indeed piety. In the introduction of the deceitful bargain by which he hopes to make his fortune, he says 'que Dius me doinst joie' (v. 213): a clear indication of his aim. He does not think of God again until the bargain turns against him: "Si m'aït Dius et bien me vengne, / Fait li prestres, engingniés sui'" (vv. 577–78) — a prayer echoed at the next stage of his defeat (vv. 771–72). His aggressive confidence is gone, and in this change of fortune he turns from God to saints: 'Saint Amadour et sainte Afflise / S'en vint jurant au lit Gillain' (vv. 585–86). Like the knight he chooses exotic saints in order to impress, but in his case it is to assert his clerical rank. Neither occurs elsewhere. Amadour is plausibly St Amator, the legendary patron of Rocamadour, while the *NRCF* suggests for Afflise Elfleda of Whitby.⁴⁵ But whether or not real saints are meant, there are unmissable puns, on love or lust, affliction and humiliation.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *NRCF*, IX, 317, 316.

⁴⁵ *NRCF*, IX, 315; Pernoud, *Saints au Moyen Âge*, p. 250; Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.1, 60. If these identifications are correct, the number of English saints in this non-insular text is remarkable; apart from these and the possible Osmundus in *Le Sacristain* II, the only other English saints in the corpus are two in *Les Deux Anglois et l'Anel* (*NRCF*, VIII/90), and Thomas Becket.

⁴⁶ Cf. Noomen, 'A propos d'une ficelle de métier', pp. 924–25, on the commoner Amand.

Saints follow thick and fast now in the priest's speech. He addresses his niece, lamenting that the perfidious knight has tricked him, but swearing

'Mais, par saint Julien de Brive
Ne sui pas encore si faus
Que voeille perdre deus cens saus' (vv. 599–601)

'Et je vous jure saint Valier
Qu'en liu de vostre puchelage
Arés en vostre mariage
Le dis livres, se je vic tant!' (vv. 619–22)

A Julian was martyred in Brioude,⁴⁷ but a second Julian provides the overtones here: Julian the Hospitaller, the patron of travellers and innkeepers.⁴⁸ The priest's lack of hospitality led to his playing the innkeeper, exploiting the travellers, trying to make money, and losing it. The *NRCF* proposes for 'Valier' a fourth-century martyr,⁴⁹ but the monetary context makes a pun on *valoir* irresistible. Like the knight, the priest calls upon saints in connection with money, and also sex, the third theme of the fabliau after money and trickery.

He greets the second stage of his defeat, the knight's demand for Avinee, with 'voi, par saint Gille' (v. 715). Giles and guile are a standard pun,⁵⁰ and *La Vescie a Prestre* (*NRCF*, X/127, v. 165) has a guileful brother Gilhe along with its simoniac brother Simon. In *Le Prestre et le Chevalier* one of the victims of the priest's outwitted guile is the guileless girl Gille. From now on the priest knows he is beaten and abandons exotic saints. He turns instead to God, first as 'Diu, le fil Marie' (v. 751); when Avinee berates him so that his position is threatened by her too, he repeatedly swears by God (vv. 865, 'par le cuer Diu', an extended, angry oath, 1017, 1026).⁵¹ When the ultimate disaster happens and the knight summons the priest himself, he calls on God again, first dejectedly: 'De ce me puet bien Dius garder!' (v. 1190), then with all the eloquence he can muster:

⁴⁷ *NRCF*, IX, 293.

⁴⁸ Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 768.

⁴⁹ *NRCF*, IX, 318.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Le Foteor* (*NRCF*, VI/59, vv. 176–77); Merceron, 'Prélude aux sermons joyeux', p. 535; Jean-Luc Leclanche, *Chevalerie et grivoiserie: fabliaux de chevalerie*, Textes et Traductions des CFMA, 7 (Paris: Champion, 2001), p. 245 (2nd rev. edn, Champion Classiques, 3, 2003, p. 240).

⁵¹ On this type of oath, see Levy, *Comic Text*, p. 189, and Philippe Ménard, *Les Fabliaux: contes à rire du moyen âge*, Littératures modernes, 32 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1983), p. 168.

A cel Seignor, qui toute rien
 Fist et forma, veue et pramet,
 Se Jhesus en boine le met,
 Que tous jours mais herbregera;
 Et ses osteus connus sera
 Por l'amour Diu et par frankisse. (vv. 1233–38)

He continues to call on God repeatedly (vv. 1246, 1247, 1252), now adding saints once more — but very different saints. These new saints are no longer obscure or exotic, nor do they offer punning possibilities: the priest is no longer trying to show his clerical status, impress, or show virtuosity. Now he is truly afraid and calls upon a litany of real, canonical, great saints who can do something for him:

'Ja, se Diu plaist, ne li serai
 En liu de femme desous homme,
 Par tous les sains qui sont a Romme,
 Et par saint Pol et par saint Pierre!
 [. . .]
 Va a ton seignor, si li conte,
 Por saint Jake et por saint Martin,
 Que il dis livres le matin
 Ara cuites, et sa despense.' (vv. 1247–50, 1257–60)

The priest piles his saints up so that they fill whole lines, calling upon the hosts of heaven in his desperation to be heard and helped, and to make the knight believe his change of heart. The power relations are now completely inverted compared to the start of the fabliau, and the priest at last uses God in a polite greeting as did the knight then, a greeting extended and effusive like his recent prayers:

'Sire, Dius vous doinst boine nuit,
 Et de cose qui vous anuit
 Vous deffenge par sa poissanche!' (vv. 1321–23)

He then agrees to be hospitable in future, calling to witness St Nicholas (v. 1338) — a saint appropriate to his new and his old life, for he was both renowned for generosity and entrusted with protecting goods from thieves.⁵²

The prayers and oaths of the knight and the priest, then, map their changing emotions and the shifting power relations in graphic ways, through the choice of exotic or effective saints, the quality of references to God, and the rhetorical settings of the names. The few invocations by others have less potential, for their

⁵² Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III.2, 979–80.

power is less variable and less central, though we may note that Avinee's swearing is confined to her arguments with the priest (vv. 847, 989, 1220). However, one of her saints is worthy of attention. She swears by 'sains Martins c'on aore a Sens' that she will not go to the knight (v. 847). It is unclear what any St Martin has to do with this town;⁵³ but if it is rather the common noun *sens* and the meaning 'St Martin, whom it is wise to revere', then Avinee is recommending that the priest — who is suffering for his avarice — imitate the generous saint of Tours. In his reply, he seems to say he is doing just that, though he is, as ever, self-satisfied and blind to the implications of his words: he defends himself against her charge of indifference by listing all the clothes he has bought her (vv. 855–60).

In his long and skilful fabliau with its many saints, Milon d'Amiens thus brings together the various ways in which we have seen calling upon the saints being exploited in other texts: in their patronage, in the potential for puns on their names, in their manifestation of character and theme, and in their placing within the narrative.

Le Bouchier d'Abeville (NRCF, III/18), part of Noomen's corpus, would repay comparison with *Le Prestre et le Chevalier*, were space to permit it. Its essential theme is the same, it has many saints (fifteen, six of them unique, one shared only with *Le Prestre et le Chevalier* and *Trubert*), and it uses saints in similar ways: they are clustered in scenes of high emotion, particularly aggression, paired for intensification, used to assert clerical status, and are often the basis of significant puns at the rhyme. It also has interesting variation between manuscripts, another fruitful approach to the study of saints' names. The fabliaux I have been able to discuss are only a few of the many where calling upon the saints contributes demonstrably to the artistry of the text, be it in the choice of saint or the circumstances of the invocation: it can deepen drama, advance and mark the development of narrative, express and enrich the dynamic between the characters. As Noomen wrote, the use of saints' names can be far more than a 'solution de facilité' — but so too can it be more than a 'ficelle de métier'.⁵⁴

⁵³ Expanding on NRCF, IX, 317, Leclanche, *Chevalerie et grivoiserie*, p. 246 (2nd edn, p. 241), writes of 'saint Martin de Sens, le Confesseur', an Orthodox name for St Martin I, Pope (see 'Martin the Confessor, Pope of Rome', in *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: Saints and Feasts* <<http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/saints.asp?contentid=17>> [accessed 8 March 2006]; *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, VIII (1967), 1294). I have been unable to find a connection with Sens, but *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, VIII, 1246, has a Martin of Saujon or Saintes.

⁵⁴ Noomen, 'A propos d'une ficelle de métier', p. 915.

Unlikely Humour

LAUGHING AT MONSTERS IN *RICHARD COEUR DE LYON*

Lesley A. Coote

The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture.¹

Richard Coeur de Lyon is an epic romance which features a Western crusade against non-Christians in the Middle East. As such, it is part of a Western literary and ideological tradition descending from the *Chanson de Roland* through to the political rhetoric of the present day.² Twenty-five years on from Edward Said's pioneering work on Orientalism, it has become almost de rigueur to speak of the 'Saracens' and their exotic allies as the Other whose difference, allied to their similarity, attracts and repels Western audiences in equal measure.³ Recent work on medieval art by Debra Higgs Strickland has demonstrated that the idea

¹ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. by J. J. Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 3–25.

² For an English translation of *Roland*, see *Chanson de Roland*, ed and trans. by Jessie Crosland (London: Chatto and Windus, 1924).

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). Classic accounts of 'Saracen' otherness are R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), Vladimir Goss, *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), and Dorothy Metlitski, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987): for recent viewpoints on this, see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'On Saracen Enjoyment: Some Fantasies of Race in Later Medieval France and England', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31 (2001), 113–46, and Michael Uebel, 'Unthinking the Monster: Twelfth-Century Responses to Saracen Alterity', in *Monster Theory*, ed. by Cohen, pp. 265–91.

of the 'Saracen' is similar to medieval Western ideas about the 'Jew' and the 'demon', in that all are stereotypical monster-figures, sharing one another's monstrous qualities.⁴ All have racial markers, such as large hooked noses and dark skin, which associate them with these qualities in the minds of their audiences. In Western crusading epics, the Christians' enemies are both the enemies of God and idol-worshippers who revere their 'gods' Mahomet (Mahoun or Mahound), Jupiter, Apollo, and Termagaunt. The Christians inscribe the righteousness of their cause and the strength of their own God on the mangled bodies of their stubbornly pagan enemies; the 'Saracens' they most admire are baptized, and join the side of the angels.⁵

Richard Coeur de Lyon, although a fourteenth-century 'potboiler', differs from the other romances in this tradition in that the hero, King Richard I ('Lion-heart') of England, is himself monstrous. The story, in both its versions, is only very loosely based on historical events, and the hero bears very little relation to the son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine who ruled England from 1189 until his death in 1199.⁶ The Richard portrayed in the romance is a superhuman

⁴ Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). See also John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁵ For examples of this, see three works ed. by S. J. Herrtage: *Sir Ferumbras*, EETS ES, 34 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1879); *The Sege of Melayne*, EETS ES, 35 (London: Trubner, 1880); and *The Taill of Rauf Coilyear, Roland and Vernagu, and Otuel*, EETS ES, 39 (London: Trubner, 1882). See also *Firumbras and Otuel and Roland, edited from BM Addit. 37492*, ed. by M. I. O'Sullivan, EETS OS, 198 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935).

⁶ John Finlayson has identified a 'long' and a 'short' version of the romance. The 'long' version, which includes Richard's demonic heritage and the cannibalism episodes is contained in London, British Library, Additional MS 31402 (a 'Thornton' manuscript of the mid-fifteenth century), and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius MS 175 (another fifteenth-century manuscript). The 'short' version is contained in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.3.1 (the 'Auchinleck' manuscript of c. 1333); London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862 (late fourteenth century) and MS Harley 4690 (fifteenth century); London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 58 (early fifteenth century); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 228 (late fifteenth century). Badminton House, MS 704.1.16, also later in date, is a single-folio fragment. The edition printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1509 and 1528 contains the longer version. Given the ephemeral nature of romance manuscripts, this does not necessarily preclude the earlier existence of the longer version, although it seems unlikely, as Brunner has suggested, that all versions have a single, original source. As an earlier, thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman version of the romance is known to have existed, it seems likely that (as with early Middle English romances such as *Sir Orfeo*) different versions of the story existed side-by-side, some oral and some literary. All of these sources may then have been drawn upon by the writers of the later

character, surrounded by elements of both humour and horror. On the one hand, he is an almost childlike figure, seemingly unaware of the limitations of his great strength, participating in ambivalent, 'knockabout' humour with Sir Fouke D'Oyley:

The kyng sawe he felte no sore,
And he thought to gyue him more;
And another stroke he hym brayde,
Hys mase upon his heed he layde,
With good wyll that stroke he set. (vv. 409–13)⁷

Sir Fouke then proceeds to knock Richard over. However, the sinister (literally, left-hand and demonic) side of Richard is revealed through the eyes of his enemies, as he sails into Jaffa harbour. He creates a monster, an alter ego, which stands in the middle of his ship:

Beffore the troue þer stood on,
Al in blood he was begon,
And hornes grete upon his hede,
The Sarezynes of hym hadde gret drede,
For it was wiþin þe nyæt
þey were agrysed of þat syæt,
And sayd he was þe deuell of hell
þat was come þem to quell. (vv. 2671–78)

It is not simply that his enemies are terrified; the monstrous Richard is also the devil, marked out by his bloody horns. He announces the arrival of this apparition by catapulting fire into the sky and setting the sea ablaze, a truly devilish entrance. The writer has deliberately elided the boundary between the King of England and the King of Hell, making it difficult for the audience to separate the two. Although the story features the Third Crusade, the hero/monster is the centre around which it revolves.⁸ It follows, therefore, that the monstrous body

literary versions. In my essay, when referring to the story as a whole, I refer to the text/s and the writer/s, on the basis of the disparate origins of the story as it now exists. See John Finlayson, 'Richard, Coeur de Lyon: Romance, History or Something in Between?', *Studies in Philology*, 87 (1990), 156–80, especially pp. 158–62, and 'Legendary Ancestors and the Expansion of Romance in Richard, Coeur de Lyon', *English Studies*, 79 (1998), 299–308, especially pp. 299–300; see also Karl Brunner, 'Der ME Versroman über Richard Löwenherz', *Weiner Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie*, 42 (1913), 1–604, especially pp. 1–17.

⁷ All quotations are from Brunner's composite edition.

⁸ See also Carolyn B. Anderson, 'Constructing Royal Character: King Richard in *Richard Coeur de Lyon*', *Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest*, 6 (1999), 85–108.

being, as Cohen puts it, 'pure culture', little importance is attached to the individuals and groups who oppose the main protagonists. For the most part, these 'others' are interchangeable.⁹ The 'Saracens', the 'French', and the 'Germans' are part of the body-count generated by this act of societal self-representation, as are the 'citizens' trampled by Godzilla or the numerous 'brides' bitten by Count Dracula. In fact, so frightening is the monster generated by early fourteenth-century English culture that it requires the cathartic release provided by laughter. Comedy is woven into the fabric of *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, but particularly into the first half of the story, in which the King of England is depicted in an ambivalent way. His nature and his intentions are essentially good, but are countered by a combination of youthful naïveté and demonic nature. This ambivalence is marked by humour.

In his great super-strength, Richard Coeur de Lyon resembles two other contemporary heroes of romance — Gamelyn and Sir Gowther.¹⁰ Gamelyn is an adolescent with a naïve trust of those around him, righting the wrongs done to him by his grasping elder brother, using his great strength to maim and kill the representatives of social injustice on his own and his audience's behalf. Like Gamelyn, Richard is portrayed as an avenger, but Richard is exacting revenge from *God's* enemies. Precisely what harm the 'Saracens' have done to God is not always made clear, except that they are in wrongful possession of the Holy Places and some of them have committed atrocities against individuals or groups of Christians (or have killed Christian soldiers in battle).¹¹ Again like Gamelyn, Richard's great strength is frequently humorous, even carnivalesque, as in the tournament episode quoted above, where he is bested by two knights, makes a

⁹ Cohen, 'Monster Culture', p. 4.

¹⁰ For *Sir Gowther*, see *Six Middle English Romances*, ed. and introd. by Maldwyn Mills, 3rd edn (London: Dent, 1988), pp. 148–68. Like *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, this romance is also to be found in the 'Auchinleck' manuscript, with a later copy in London, British Library, MS Royal 17.B.43. For *Gamelyn*, see *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, ed. by Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), pp. 184–226. Knight and Ohlgren follow Keen and Holt in ascribing a mid-fourteenth-century date to this story, although Skeat suggests slightly earlier (c. 1340). Its earliest manuscript appearance is in early fifteenth-century manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*.

¹¹ The answer to this is likely to be that the 'Saracens' take on guilt attributed to another set of monsters, the Jews; see Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews*, pp. 159–92. On p. 161, Strickland presents an image of Jews alongside Saracens as the enemies of Christianity from the church of Beaulieu, whence Richard I and Philip Augustus of France departed for the Third Crusade.

joke of it, and takes them on pilgrimage and on crusade as his captains and companions-in-arms.¹² In such circumstances, humour is used to reduce the social distance between king and subject, to create a world in which advancement is based not on rank, but on merit.¹³ Throughout *Richard Coeur de Lyon* there is evidence of the baronial opposition to kings mentioned by Susan Crane as a feature of insular Anglo-Norman romance.¹⁴ This is evidenced by the behaviour of Thomas of Moulton after capturing the city of Orglyous ('Proud'). The English captain does not automatically kill the inhabitants, but spares their lives, although refusing their offer of ransom. He is later forced to kill them all because of their treacherous — and ungrateful — attempt to kill himself and his soldiers (vv. 4205–30). Sir Thomas is thereby distanced from his king, who kills, and orders killing, of defeated civilians of both sexes and all ages, without mercy.¹⁵ Thomas acts according to New Testament, Christian (and chivalric) principles, whilst Richard thinks and behaves in the manner of the Old Testament God.

Gamelyn may be more sinned against than sinning, but Sir Gowther is a real monster, who has much more in common with the figure of Richard Coeur de Lyon. Both have a demonic parent: Gowther is the son of a male demon and a duchess, whilst Richard is the son of a female demon and a king.¹⁶ The birth of Gowther is illustrative of the social damage which can be caused by infertility and lack of heirs to a kingdom, whereas Richard's birth, along with that of his brother John and his (imaginary) sister Topyas, results from the conjunction of

¹² For tournament analogues, see Bradford B. Broughton, *The Legends of King Richard I Coeur de Lion: A Study of Sources and Variations to the Year 1600* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), pp. 90–92.

¹³ This is also a feature of *Gamelyn*, in which Adam the steward becomes a 'father figure' to the hero, from whom he gains half his inheritance. 'Saracen' rulers in crusade romances are also terrible but comic figures, for example the Sultan Laban in *The Sowdone of Babylone*, who curses his gods and throws childish temper tantrums when they fail him. See two volumes ed. by Emil Hausknecht: *The Sowdone of Babylone*, EETS ES, 38 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1881); and *The Lyf of the Noble and Christen Prince, Charles the Grete, translated from the French by William Caxton and printed by him 1485*, 2 vols, EETS ES, 36, 37 (London: Trubner, 1880–81). See also note 5, above.

¹⁴ Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 19–24.

¹⁵ Although Richard does seem to believe that he is doing God's will. On the one occasion when he is tempted to spare his conquered enemies, it is out of greed for ransom, and an angel orders the killing when he demurs: vv. 3745–54.

¹⁶ Broughton, *Legends*, pp. 11–15, 78–86.

the kingdom's need for heirs and the tyrannical exercise of a ruler's power for his own gratification, putting his own desires before the best interests of his subjects. Whilst Henry II is mindful of his kingdom's needs in taking a wife, he is determined to marry a wife who will please his own desire.¹⁷ This transgressive self-satisfaction (not to mention lust) results in his breaking another feared taboo: intermarriage between Christian and heathen, or in this case demonic, bloodlines. The result of this is a monstrous child, or actually two monstrous children. The elder brother, Richard, is a superhuman monster, and the younger, John, is a traitor and would-be usurper.¹⁸

The demonic side of Gowther's nature causes him to cut a bloody swathe of destruction through his society — killing nine wetnurses, biting a large chunk out of his mother's breast, raping and then burning a convent of nuns in their own church, and generally spreading chaos and extreme violence, terrorizing his father's kingdom.¹⁹ When he eventually discovers the truth about his parentage, Gowther goes on a pilgrimage to Rome. The pope, besides putting him on a diet of dogs' food, contains and expiates Gowther's violence by turning him against another group of monsters, the 'Saracen' enemies of God. Thus the hero cancels out one orgy of bloodletting and violence with another, the difference being only that the targets of the second onslaught are socially and ideologically acceptable to an English audience.²⁰ Having completed this task, Gowther is allowed to eat human food again. He returns to his own country, marries, becomes emperor, and is assimilated into an established (and improved) position in the society he has left.²¹ Richard Coeur de Lyon is also an unstoppable force who commits acts

¹⁷ A similar situation arises in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, where the Italian ruler Walter accedes to his subjects' request for him to marry and provide heirs, but insists upon marrying a woman of his own choice, whom he then proceeds to tyrannize and oppress.

¹⁸ Although marriage to an unconverted woman was seen as a very bad thing, marriage upon conversion is frequently seen as a very good thing, even spilling from the pages of romance into the reality of royal propaganda in the 1440s. See Lesley A. Coote, 'A Letter from Babylon: Henry VI and the Sultan of Syria', *Al Masaq*, 14 (2002), 17–24.

¹⁹ *Sir Gowther*, lines 106–41, 178–201.

²⁰ A similar development takes place after the 'confession' of Guy of Warwick; see Paul Price, 'Confessions of a Godless Killer: Guy of Warwick and Comprehensive Entertainment', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. by Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows, and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 93–110. A genre study of these 'episodic' romances has yet to be written.

²¹ For liminality as a rite of passage, see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 94–130.

of extreme violence, but he commits them only against victims acceptable to his English audience. These include 'French', 'Germans', and 'Greeks' (in fact, any 'foreigners' seem to be acceptable targets), 'Saracens' (i.e. non-Christians of all races and colours), and of course, lions. Like Gowther, he is unable to expiate the sin of his birth solely by going on a peaceful pilgrimage, although in Richard's case the 'peaceful' pilgrimage deteriorates into violence, as he fights for survival against the power of the King of Almayn. Unlike Gowther, Richard not only kills his enemies, but has a liking for dismembering and eating them (although on one occasion unwittingly), and unlike Gowther's exploits, Richard's ultra-violent activities are presented as humorous. Like Gamelyn and Gowther, Richard has lessons to learn about socially acceptable behaviour, having fallen into the king's hands initially by getting into a fight over a goose in a tavern, and by — ironically — being discourteous to a minstrel (vv. 650–98).

There is a basic 'black' humour which runs through the text/s of *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, which is to be found in many other violent romances, and in chronicles. This is the witty remark based upon the extended metaphor, which usually occurs when violent death or injury has been visited upon a hated enemy. When the English knights attack the emperor's men in Cyprus, demanding the return of the ransom paid for King Richard's release from prison, this is described by the writer/s in terms of the just reward for greed:

They smote the cordes, and felled downe
Many a riche paulyowne;
And euer cryed squyer and knyght:
'Smyte! Lay on! See downe ryght!
Yelde the tresour ayenwarde
That ye toke from Kynge Rycharde.
Ye ben worthy to haue suche mede,
With grymly woundes to lye and blede!' (vv. 2303–10)²²

Attacking the city of Acre, Richard orders his siege tower, known as Mate-Gryffon ('Death to Greeks'), manoeuvred up to the city walls. On the top he has his men set up a mangonel, from which beehives are hurled into the city:

²² The continual accusations of greed in others are in themselves interesting in view of the obvious love of the crusaders for plunder: on a remarkably frequent number of occasions King Richard or his men take large amounts of rich pillage from the unbaptized. This is presented as justice, and Richard differs from the greedy Philip in that he shares this treasure with his men. Laden with all this plunder, the crusaders are still, incredibly, able to march from one city, town, or battle to another.

The wheder was hoot in someres tyde,
 þe bees bursten out on euery syde,
 And were anoyyd, and fful of grame;
 þey dede þe Sarazynes ful gret schame,
 Ffor þey hem stungge in þe vysage,
 þat alle þey gunne ffor to rage;
 And hydde hem in a deep selere,
 þat non of hem durste come nere;
 And sayden Kyng Richard was fful ffel,
 Whenne hys fflyes byten so wel! (vv. 2911–20)

Other jokes are based upon the often-repeated idea that the ‘Saracens’ are ‘dogs’ or ‘hounds’, and the idea of revenge, or ‘payback’:

to slee þe houndes non ne sparde.
 Kyng R. hys ax in hond he hente,
 And payde the Sarezyns here rente.
 Swylke leuery he hem delte,
 Al þat he hytte anon þey swelte. (vv. 4054–58)

Towards the end of the story King Richard drives a large ‘Saracen’ force into a quagmire, where they flounder and drown, whilst Richard slaughters those who try to save themselves. The writer observes:

þoo myghte men se þe heþene men
 Lyggen and baþen hem in þe fen;
 and þoo þat wolden haue comme uppe,
 þey drank of Kyng Richardis cuppe. (vv. 7021–24)

The humour ensures that the audience cannot linger on the spectacle of the dead and suffering, the doomed and the desperate bodies, for long enough to even begin to appreciate these events from an alternative point of view. The ideology of the dominant group is immediately inscribed upon the monstrous Others, and the humour is used to reinforce this rapid movement from signifier to signified.²³ It also serves as a cathartic release for the audience’s potential horror at the grim spectacle of fear and death which is being played out for their entertainment.

Central to this spectacle is Richard, the chivalric, epic hero who is not entirely what he seems to be. As an epic romance hero, Richard challenges medieval

²³ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). This is used very interestingly in the context of Middle English romances, including *Sir Gowther*, by Donna Crawford, “‘Gronyng with gryswly wounde’: Injury in Five Middle English Lays”, in *Readings in Middle English Romance*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 35–52.

Western ideals of Christian chivalry, kingship, and sexuality. At the beginning of the story, he is described as

[. . .] Kyng Rychard,
 þat neuer was founde coward!
 It is ful good to here in jeste
 Off his prowesse and hys conqueste. (vv. 3–6)

He is also ‘doughty in dede’ and ‘þe werryour beste / þat men fynde in ony jeste’ (vv. 30, 31, 32). The writer claims that Richard surpasses the other great Worthies of the Middle Ages — Roland, Oliver, the Douzepeers, Alexander, Charlemagne, Arthur and Gawain, Turpin, Ogier, and the heroes of Greece and Troy — in his ‘doughty deeds’ and his reputation as a warrior. Conquest and doughty deeds are by their nature associated with violence, but in Richard’s case this violence is, in a Lacanian sense, excessive. Of course, this is not necessarily seen as a bad thing, as it is directed against those who have undoubtedly (according to the dominant ideology which the writer seeks to reinforce) deserved their fate. The impact of Richard’s violence, however, is graphically magnified by his super-strong body. This lays added stress upon the impotence of Richard’s victims. Borne down by the power of a monstrous, excessive form and the power of the ideology which it embodies, they do not stand a chance from the outset. This gives Richard the appearance of a murderous bully, a perversion of his status as king and commander-in-chief. In addition to this, Richard’s xenophobic and genocidal acts are supported and encouraged by God, acting through his angelic messengers.²⁴ At one point, St George appears to help Richard by slaughtering more of God’s enemies:

Kyng Richard was almost ateynt,
 And in þe powder nyȝ adreynt.
 On hys knees he gan doun ffale,
 Help! to Jhesu he gan calle,
 For loue off his modyr Mary;
 And as I ffynde in his story,
 He seyȝ come Seynt George þe knyȝt,
 Upon a stede good and lyȝt,
 In armes whyte as þe flour,
 Wiȝ a croys off red colour.
 Al þat he mette in þat stounde,
 Hors and man he felde to grounde. (vv. 4883–94)

²⁴ Once again, this reinforces the dominant ideology.

King Richard rises from his despair and exhaustion to drive the 'Saracens' back to 'þe mount of Nazareth'. Faced as they are with the spectacular force of this monster from their own Id, all the audience can do is either scream or laugh, or both.²⁵

Often cited as Richard's most violent acts are the incidents in which he cannibalizes his victims, on the second occasion ordering their dead bodies to be deliberately and meticulously mutilated.²⁶ These incidents may be seen as the devilish side of Richard's nature asserting itself.²⁷ It should be noted, however, that Richard himself is not responsible for the first incident, in which he is unwittingly fed 'Saracen pork' by a wise old knight.²⁸ The old soldier is concerned with the King's ill health and the potential damage to the Christian, and English, cause which will result. He also provides the audience with an opportunity to laugh at the King's expense. This particular incident also differs from the second in the nature of its humour. As Richard eats his meal 'hys folk hem tournyd away and lowə' (v. 3114). The audience are invited to take part in the joke, laughing with the serving-men at the King's expense. The writer 'milks' the humour of the occasion by having Richard not only eat the meat, but gnaw the bones (v. 3111). When Richard is informed of the origins of the 'pork' meal which has restored his health, he reacts (to the relief of those responsible) with great laughter:

'What deuyll is þis?' þe kyng cryde,
And gan to lauəe as he were wood.

²⁵ This idea is discussed in Margaret Tarratt, 'Monsters from the Id', in *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant, 3rd edn (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), pp. 346–65. Tarratt cites Freud, 'It (the Id) is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle [. . .]. The Id, of course, knows no judgments of value; no good and evil; no morality.'

²⁶ Broughton, *Legends*, pp. 108–10.

²⁷ These are, rightly, linked to Richard's demonic heritage in Alan S. Ambrisco, 'Cannibalism and Cultural Encounters in *Richard Coeur de Lyon*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 29 (1999), 499–528.

²⁸ At a critical point during the siege of Acre Richard is ill and develops a craving for pork. None can be found, as 'Saracens' — and those other 'monstrous races' the Jews — do not eat it. The wily old soldier orders a prisoner to be killed and cooked, then served to the king as 'pork'. For the ideological and nationalist implications of this, see Geraldine Heng, 'The Romance of England: *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, Saracens, Jews, and the Politics of Race and Nation', in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 135–72.

'What, is Sarezynys flesch þus good?
 And neuere erst I nouȝt wyste?
 By Goddys deþ and hys upryste,
 Schole we neuere dye for defawte,
 Whyl we may in any assawte
 Slee Sarezynys, þe flesch mowe take,
 Seþen, and roste hem, and doo hem bake,
 Gnawen here fflesch to þe bones.' (vv. 3214–23)

The 'joke' has been set up by the comic representation of the 'Saracen's' head:

Hys swarte vys whenne þe kyng seeþ,
 Hys blacke berd, and hys whyte teeþ,
 Hou hys lypys grennyd wyde. (vv. 3211–13)

The description, highlighting black skin, beard, white teeth, and thick lips, is that of a 'monster', an 'Ethiopian', and the presentation is the comic image of a grinning idiot.²⁹ The audience is given cathartic release from the monstrosity of the victim, from the horror of the physical sight of the head, and of Richard's cannibalism, by the comic inversion of the situation. Richard, however, then carries the joke a bit further:

'Now I haue it prouyd ones,
 For hungyr ar I be woo,
 I and my folk schole eete moo!' (vv. 3224–26)

Like an oversized child, unaware that humour has its limits, Richard removes the joke from its context and inserts it into a different, wider context, in which the carnivalesque humour of excessive eating is not so 'comic'.³⁰

The second incident springs from the first. Richard is victorious and takes many prisoners. These appeal to Saladin for help, as a result of which the 'Saracen' leader offers Richard money for their release. Richard arranges a terrible reception for Saladin's ambassadors, again set in the context of a meal. These two incidents have another, religious element of carnivalesque medieval comedy. If the first meal is an inverted Eucharist, the second meal is an inverted Last Supper, fiendishly perverted in a manner similar to the motif of the supper in Hell.³¹

²⁹ Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews*, pp. 79–90.

³⁰ *Gamelyn* also contains instances of comic violence and maiming linked to meals. For the carnivalesque and demonic meals, see *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*, ed. by Pam Morris with a glossary by Graham Roberts (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), pp. 194–244.

³¹ For example, in Raoul de Houdenc's *Songe d'Enfer*, an English translation of which is in Brian J Levy, 'Raoul de Houdenc Goes to the Movies', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance*

In this incident, Richard plays the part of the devilish host. He orders his marshal to execute some of the highest-born and worthiest of the captives, to cut off their heads and take them to the kitchen. The cooks are to boil the heads and strip off the hair. Each is to be served up on a plate in the manner of a pig's head (another 'pork' joke), facing upwards with the teeth grinning, and a strip of parchment on the forehead proclaiming the owner's name and kindred. The messengers are served with one head between two, whilst Richard is served with one. When Richard sees the mixture of horror and grief on the faces of his guests, he proceeds to eat the slices of head carved by his server (again, in the manner of pigs' cheeks, extending the 'pork' joke even further). The running 'pork' joke, which links both of the episodes together, is stretched and twisted, exposing the porosity of the membrane which separates comedy from horror. After mockingly asking the messengers why they do not want their food, he has them served with a 'proper' feast, then addresses them with a mixture of mockery and threat:

[h]is is þe maner off myn house,
To be seruyd ferst, God it woot.
Wiþ Sarezynys hedes al hoot:
But ȝoure maner I ne knewe!' (vv. 3510–13)

This time the monstrous eating is not comedy, but horror. One of the most important aspects of the monster's character is his unpredictability, and thus Richard swings from carnivalesque, almost burlesque, humour to a similar incident which borders on the horrific; he is funny at one moment, fearsome the next. The Richard of the first half of the text walks the fine line between ruler and tyrant, as described by John of Salisbury:

The prince is a sort of image of divinity and the tyrant is an image of the strength of the Adversary and the depravity of Lucifer.³²

The good ruler and the tyrant king may be binary opposites in political theory, but the writer of *Richard Coeur de Lyon* and his audience are well aware that this is not the case in reality. Laughter affirms the inevitability that every ruler — indeed, every human being — has characteristics of both, whilst also offering the

Teaching, 12 (2005), 27–46. The joke about pork is based, of course, on the dietary restrictions which forbid both Jews and Muslims to eat pork.

³² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Book VIII, Chapter 17, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman, 4th edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 191.

audience a temporary respite from their realization of this truth. To laugh is, briefly, both to affirm and to forget.

Once again, the writer/s question the assumptions of their culture, revealing the nature of what lies beneath chivalry and conquest, the idea of the *miles Christi*. This is one of two incidents in which the King rides roughshod over the code of chivalry. He is breaking, even mocking, the chivalric code of hospitality, especially when applied to the sanctity of communal meals, whilst also perverting the rules of war concerning the protection and conduct of ambassadorial exchanges. Not only is the nature of the chivalric code and the conduct of war being questioned, so is the status of the 'Saracen' as monster. The writer does not allow the audience to turn away from the mutilated bodies of the slain; he also insists that the dead have names and kindred, and lingers on the reactions of the ambassadors as they look at the severed and mutilated heads. The audience is not directed to think immediately about ideology, but to consider the abjection of both the victims and the beholders of this horrible sight. Although the ideology of crusade is ultimately validated by Richard's triumphs and God's interventions, the writer/s remind us that there is always a price to be paid by someone for the triumph of others, and that the winning of glory, honour, and reputation (the glittering prizes of chivalry) is not unproblematic.

The consumption of the blood in the Eucharistic meal is implicit in the eating of the body, and as mentioned earlier, these meals have Eucharistic connotations. In tales of vampirism, the wanton spilling and drinking of body fluids is highly eroticized, being both socially and sexually transgressive. It is the release of that which cannot be controlled from within the body of the individual, the potential for chaos.³³ Before the audience of *Richard Coeur de Lyon* witnesses the hero presiding over the mutilation of dead young 'Saracen' men and eating them, with its homosexual connotations, they see the bestial inferences of his eating the lion's heart. Broughton sees biblical and classical echoes in this incident, and indeed these are there, but at surface level it counts as yet another instance of the barbaric horror of Richard as monster.³⁴ In the terminology of the medieval bestiary, the lion represented kingly qualities, and in biblical and classical

³³ Julia Kristeva, *The Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). For a discussion of body fluids as transgressive, see Patrick Fuery, *New Developments in Film Theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 80–81.

³⁴ Broughton, *Legends*, pp. 68–69, 117–19.

terms it represented untamed power and strength.³⁵ Richard may be stronger and more powerful than a lion, but in this, the first half of *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, the King's power is still partly uncontrolled, and therefore dangerous. The writer/s must offset this danger with comedy. Obviously, this is intended to demonstrate why he is called 'Lionheart', and even here there is the same devilish, carnival-esque humour as marks the first cannibalism episode, as Richard, remembering his chivalric good manners, dips the heart into the salt before eating it.³⁶

Besides being a salutary reminder of the violence, sadism, and paganism which can be found beneath the surface of respectable English society, this incident also reminds the audience of the possible presence of alternative sexuality. Contemporaries certainly associated Richard with sexual deviance, although whether these were actually accusations of homosexuality has been contested.³⁷ The morality of the prince was undoubtedly of great importance in the fourteenth century, as the nation's health was seen to mirror the king's. In *Adam Davy's Dreams* the beams of light emanating from Edward II's head reach out to the entire kingdom, and yet the same King, after his deposition and death in 1327, is seen by another prophetic writer as breathing disease into the kingdom.³⁸ The vampiric monster, predating equally on male, female, and beast, challenges the boundaries of accepted sexuality (and morality), although the sexual 'norm' and moral purity are eventually vindicated. The King of Almayn's daughter Margery falls for Richard's hard-bodied manliness without much trouble and offers him sex on demand (or even without demand). In the end, as with the James Bond style of cinematic adventurers, the woman is the hero's reward for his efforts.³⁹

³⁵ 'Their courage is in their breast, their strength in their head [. . .]. The lion is proud by nature; he will not live with other kinds of beasts in the wild, but like a king disdains the company of the masses.' See *Bestiary*, ed. and trans. by Richard Barber (London: Folio Society, 1992), pp. 23–24.

³⁶ vv. 1105–09. Richard 'kosher's' the lion's heart by pressing out the blood, then dipping it in salt — another perverse 'abjection' of the monstrous Jew, but also identifying the monstrous Jew with Richard himself.

³⁷ John Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion: Kingship, Chivalry and War in the Twelfth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 133–37.

³⁸ *Adam Davy's Dreams about Edward the Second*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS OS, 69 (London: Trubner, 1878).

³⁹ 'The monster enforces the cultural codes that regulate sexual desire': Cohen, 'Monster Culture', p. 14.

The monstrous Richard, because he exists outside his cultural origin, can fulfil the 'fantasies of appetite and power' of his audience, without their being openly implicated in his activities. It cannot be denied that *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, with its hero who is able not only to abject and humiliate his enemies, but to annihilate and consume them both sexually and physically, crudely offers its audience the ultimate in wish-fulfilment.⁴⁰ In Gestalt terms, Coeur de Lyon represents the hero's, and the audience's, fractured and therefore dangerous selves.⁴¹ Laughter provides a respite, albeit temporary, from their need to accept that they are looking at themselves. In this case, like a good horror film, the romance is a 'good host'; in its safe space, the audience can wallow in the monsters from their own inner depths, emerging relieved, 'cleansed', and with their social, political, and religious ideologies vindicated.⁴²

Richard's other tellingly devilish trait is his cunning. In medieval comic literature, the devil is a trickster.⁴³ Again challenging the ideals of chivalric society, where the victory goes to the most worthy, comic stories such as fabliaux acknowledge that in reality, the victory often goes to the cleverest, even if s/he has less than perfect motivations. This is demonstrated in Richard's game of 'pluck buffet' with the King of Almayn's son.⁴⁴ After surviving a mighty blow, Richard happily decides to cheat, without any apparent censure from the romance-writer/s. He hardens his fist with wax, enabling him to inflict a blow which, when accompanied by his own super-strength, is powerful enough to be fatal. On other occasions, the writer/s praise Richard's cunning in battle, and relate this to the device of three leopards (*not* lions) on his shield. According to the bestiary:

The pard is a mottled beast and very swift, thirsty for blood; if it pounces, it kills. The leopard is born of an adulterous match between a lioness and a pard, from which a third kind of beast is born [. . .]. The mystic pard signifies either the devil, full of a diversity of vices, or the sinner, spotted with crimes and a variety of wrongdoings.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ This audience, as with the audience for this type of film, will be young to middle-aged, and male.

⁴¹ See Bruce F. Kavin, 'Children of the Light', in *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. by Grant, pp. 324–45.

⁴² Kavin, 'Children of the Light', pp. 324–25.

⁴³ Brian Levy, *The Comic Text: Patterns and Images in the Old French Fabliaux*, Faux Titre, 186 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 160–96.

⁴⁴ Broughton, *Legends*, pp. 120–23.

⁴⁵ Richard is described as 'in dede lyon, in thought lybarde': v. 2194; *Bestiary*, ed. and trans. by Barber, p. 35.

By the fourteenth century, the leopard was recognizable as a symbol for the King of England, as he sometimes appears in political prophecies, for example 'Anglia transmittet leopardum, lilia Galli'.⁴⁶ The King's cunning is thus shown both as a quality desirable in a king and as an English quality — by which, like the comic hero, the English are still, as in Richard's time, able to outwit and overcome 'foreigners', the French in particular.

Sometime around the year 1308, an unknown writer calling himself 'Adam Davy' wrote a propaganda tract designed to appeal to the new young King of England, Edward II. In it he outlines the fourteenth-century English 'dream' ruler. Edward begins by demonstrating his divinely gifted power and invulnerability, then he goes to Rome dressed as a pilgrim, to be crowned emperor by the pope. After this, he goes on a successful crusade to restore the Holy Land to Christianity, supported by Christ and the Virgin Mary. Finally, he achieves a martyr's glory in heaven among the saints.⁴⁷ This remained the core of the prophetic agenda which the English believed one great ruler would fulfil in the Last Days of history. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they continued to expect a great King of England, successor to Arthur, whose life would fulfil these expectations, which included the forcible conversion of both 'Saracens' and Jews.⁴⁸

From the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, then, the English needed a crusading hero. In addition to Charlemagne, the French could call upon the saintly Louis IX, who brought back to France relics of Christ's cross and Passion. The only crusading hero ever to rule England was Richard I. As a national hero, Richard was something of an embarrassment. His language, culture, and sympathies were centred upon his own and his mother's duchy of Aquitaine, and he viewed England as a source of royal prestige — it gave him a royal title which enabled him to be the social equal of Philip of France, for instance — and funds.

⁴⁶ 'England will send the leopard, lilies of Gaul'. This is a prophecy concerning the prophetic agenda described below, beginning with the defeat of France, appearing initially in England in the early fourteenth century. See Lesley A. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 112–15. Richard wears his shield with his symbolic leopards for the duel with Saladin, in which he again displays (praiseworthy) cunning: vv. 5709–10.

⁴⁷ Edward's pilgrim attire in the prophetic text is similar to that which Richard would have worn on his first pilgrimage; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp. 84–91.

⁴⁸ Enforced conversion was a way of making sure that this took place sooner rather than later, in case these were the Last Days.

This proved particularly useful when he was captured and imprisoned by Leopold of Austria, and his kingdom had to bear the brunt of Leopold's massive ransom demands. Richard's crusade was ultimately a failure, as he failed in his objective to re-establish the kingdom of Jerusalem, or even to capture the city. His truce with Saladin resulted from a great military achievement, but it still amounted to somewhat less than the Third Crusade's original aims. Richard's imprisonment and loss of allies was due less to Philip's cowardice and greed (as *Richard Coeur de Lyon* claims) than to Richard's capacity for picking violent quarrels and insulting people; he earned the hostility of Leopold of Austria by insulting his coat of arms, one of the deepest insults possible under the code of chivalry, which Richard knew well.⁴⁹ Richard died at the hand of an archer whilst besieging the castle of Chalus, because Richard thought the castle's lord was in possession of treasure which should belong to him. Whether or not he was homo- or bisexual, he was certainly no pillar of moral rectitude. The writer/s of *Richard Coeur de Lyon* have had to resort to the expedient of rewriting history in order to deal with unpalatable truths which would be known to their audience, such as Richard's ransom. In this case, the English crusaders win the money back, with interest, from the King of Almayn's army on their way to the Holy Land. This face-saving scenario is made possible by moving Richard's imprisonment to an episode before the Crusade, rather than after it.⁵⁰ Richard's death is attributed to a combination of a traitorous spy and a heatwave, causing the King to remove his helmet for long enough to be shot. However, the writer/s have taken many of the disadvantages presented by the historical Richard and turned them to advantage, not by downplaying or denying them, but by magnifying them to the point of excess, injecting black (even 'sick') humour into their presentation.⁵¹ This has resulted in a highly effective piece of entertainment which retained its relevance and appeal to English audiences to the end of the medieval period, and beyond. All of this is achieved, of course, at the expense of the 'monstrous Others' who, for the vast majority of the romance's audience, exist only as constructs of their own imagination. Although the political stance

⁴⁹ The romance-writer/s move the incident of the banner to after Leopold's departure, alleging that Richard threw it down in anger at Leopold's cowardice; although he actually threw it down because he was insulted at its presence beside the banners of two kings.

⁵⁰ Richard was actually captured on the way back to England after the Third Crusade, hence his appearance in disguise in Robin Hood stories, and (following this tradition) in *Ivanhoe*. See Broughton, *Legends*, pp. 129–32.

⁵¹ This technique is, of course, still used by cartoonists and scriptwriters.

and racist ideology of the text/s is — rightly — unacceptable to modern readers, and although the actual writing is not of any great quality, *Richard Coeur de Lyon* represents an inspired solution to the problem of difficult material.

Like Sir Gowther, who has to be quickly removed from society in the interests of ‘damage limitation’, Richard operates in a liminal space. The writer/s speedily remove him from England, first on pilgrimage to central Europe, then to the Mediterranean, and finally to the Middle East, where his ‘talents’ are employed in a safely contained arena. His own liminal qualities as monster are matched by the geographically liminal spaces in which he is allowed to operate.⁵²

If Richard were allowed to remain in England, particularly in his original unreformed state, he would wreak havoc and terrorize the population, as Gowther does. Magic and a historical setting help to create this liminal space, which is also frequently a carnivalesque space, in which different points of view may be offered for discussion. Of course, the career of the *real* Richard, who spent no more than a matter of months in England throughout his reign and who is said to have boasted of his family’s legendary/demonic origins, offers the ideal historical framework within which the writer/s can exercise their imagination, and in this respect they are both crafty and inspired in their choice of subject matter.

Unlike Charlemagne in the *Roland* stories, who must remain a great and wise ruler, whilst others do the work of epic heroism, Richard can be presented as a heroic warrior and man of action. In fact, throughout the first half of the romance, the audience is given the impression that Richard is still learning his trade of kingship. For the last half of the story, having learnt how to be a good king, he proves himself worthy of his place in society and in history. He begins by lecturing Philip of France on why he (Philip) is *not* a good ruler (vv. 4688–35). Although the underlying black humour of killing continues to the end of the romance, all other humour surrounding Richard then ceases. He loses his appetite for human flesh and the internal organs of lions, and there are no more authorial ‘jokes’ at his expense. He will no longer indulge in games of ‘pluck-buffet’ or allow himself to be knocked over by his barons. All of this is necessary because Richard, like Gowther, must be allowed to return home and reintegrate himself into English society. By the time the story ends, Richard has become far less of a challenge to the hegemonic ideologies of the society which has generated him.

⁵² ‘Through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delineated and permanently liminal space’, Cohen, ‘Monster Culture’, p. 17.

The monster has been tamed and sanitized, but he still threatens. Richard has not lost his capacity for violence, and the writer/s have to admit that he died violently, fighting against his own vassals. At the end of the tale, as we have it, there is an implication that Margery's reward for her support and loyalty will be marriage to Richard, but this does not happen within the text itself. Richard does not cease to be the son of a demon; he still has his superhuman strength, and the power to exercise it in whatever way he chooses. The possibilities inherent in the monstrous side of his character remain. The monster is still present within the culture, beneath its surface, waiting to be resurrected. A vital part of the appeal of this type of text is that the audience knows that they are able, when the tale is told, to return to the relative security of their daily routine, and their 'normal' societal values. They also know that the monster will return in another form, to challenge, threaten, terrify, and seduce them all over again:

Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again [. . .] it always rises from the dissection table as its secrets are about to be revealed and vanishes into the night.⁵³

One of the attractions of this type of literature is the audience's willing realization that the monster will always have the last laugh. In laughing with, rather than at him, they come to terms with their own, and their society's, imperfections.

⁵³ Cohen, 'Monster Culture', p. 4.

HUMOUR AND IDENTITY IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

David Crouch

There is not very much intentional humour to be found in charters, which makes it all the more welcome when it does actually surface. In the great deed collection of Durham Cathedral Priory can be found just such a rare moment, worth at least half a smile. It is in a conveyance to Durham by a man called Geoffrey L'Abbé (*Galfridus Abbas*) of the church of Normanton-le-Soar in Leicestershire, which thus became one of the priory's southernmost possessions.¹ The conveyance must date to a time after the institution of Leicester abbey's first abbot in 1143/4, for he is one of the witnesses. The attestation of Emma, Geoffrey's wife, dates it to before 1163, by which time she had left the world to be a nun at Nuneaton. It would be too much to expect humour from the charter itself, but it surfaces in the seal.

Geoffrey l'Abbé was quite a well-known twelfth-century character. He was the son of Ralph, butler and chief officer of Earl Robert II of Leicester (died 1168). Ralph was in turn the son of an eleventh-century Norman called Robert fitz Erchembold. Ralph the butler retired in 1140 into the abbey of Alcester, which he had founded.² Geoffrey was his second son and inherited some estates from his father in Northamptonshire. He acquired other estates from a very good

¹ Durham, Dean and Chapter Muniments, 2.3. Ebor. 14. The only printed version seems to be in a footnote in the *Newminster Cartulary*, ed. by J. T. Fowler, Surtees Society, 66 (London, 1878), p. xvii. I would very much like to thank Alan Piper, archivist of the Durham Cathedral muniments, for his prompt and exceedingly helpful assistance in the compilation of this article.

² For Geoffrey's family, see D. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins: The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 92 and note, pp. 142–43. For his grandfather, see *Cartulaire de l'église de la Sainte-Trinité de Beaumont-le-Roger*, ed. by E. Deville (Paris: Champion, 1912), p. 13.



Figure 21. Charter Seal. Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections, Durham Cathedral Muniments, 2.3.Ebor. 14. Reproduced with permission.

marriage to an heiress by the name of Emma, who brought him land in several Midlands counties.³ His manor at Normanton-le-Soar came to him almost certainly as a gift from Earl Robert, his lord, for it was the Earl who confirmed

³ The marriage to Emma, previously married to one Ralph de Tourville of Croft, can be reconstructed from London, British Library, Additional Charters 47594, 48038; *Pipe Roll of Henry II*, Pipe Roll Society, 1 (London, 1884), pp. 26, 52.

the grant of its church to Durham. Geoffrey succeeded to his father's position in the Earl's council, where he served until the Earl died in 1168. Geoffrey occupied the seneschalcy of Leicester, and up until 1155 was the Earl's appointee as Sheriff of Leicester.⁴ Geoffrey survived the Earl by several years and died at some time after 1176.⁵

Geoffrey's elder brother took the name Butler and turned it into a hereditary surname. He founded a prominent baronial family — the Botelers of Oversley and Wem — which was important in Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, and Shropshire in various branches into the fifteenth century. Geoffrey, however, earned another name. He is found as early as 1139, before his father's retirement, called already in Latin documents *Galfridus abbas*.⁶ As cognomina go, this is quite an early one. Its intent is not necessarily clear, but it obviously belongs to the class of ironic metonymic names: a small class compared to the much larger groups relating to crude physical characteristics and even cruder sexuality.⁷ Geoffrey was by no means the only twelfth-century knight to get the name *abbas*, 'the Abbot'. A contemporary of his in Anjou was 'Le Bon Abbé de Rougé' who appears in the description of a tournament in Anjou of about 1167.⁸ Le Bon Abbé de Rougé was mentioned elsewhere by Robert de Torigny as one who, in 1173, with others of the disinherited of Maine and Anjou, took to the forests and preyed on the king's officers.⁹ The Rougé of his toponymic was a forest (*Rogiacy silva*) in Anjou (Maine-et-Loire).¹⁰ In Le Bon Abbé's case it seems a fair bet that

⁴ For Geoffrey's offices, see F. M. Stenton, *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw from Various Collections* (London: British Academy, 1920), p. 249; *Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. by H. Hall, 3 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1896), II, 655–56.

⁵ Geoffrey was still alive in September 1175; *Pipe Roll of 22 Henry II*, ed. by J. H. Round, Pipe Roll Society, 25 (London, 1904), p. 184.

⁶ National Archives, E13/76, m. 69d.

⁷ On this, see D. Postles, *Talking Ballocs: Nicknames and English Medieval Sociolinguistics* (Leicester: Centre for English Local History, 2003).

⁸ *History of William Marshal*, trans. by S. Gregory, ed. by A. Holden and D. Crouch, vol. 1, Anglo-Norman Text Society, Occasional Publication Series, 4 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2002), v. 1465.

⁹ Robert de Torigny, *Chronica*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard*, 4 vols, ed. by R. Howlett, Rolls Series (London, 1884–89), IV (1889), 261.

¹⁰ For references to the forest, see *Cartulaire de St-Aubin d'Angers*, 2 vols, ed. by A. Bertrand de Brousillon (Paris, 1903), I, 310–11.

such a tourneying, rebellious character took the name because being a 'good abbot' was everything he was not.

In the case of Geoffrey l'Abbé of Leicestershire, the intent of his surname was most likely to be a hyperbolic and ironic reflection on his literacy and numeracy. A man who made his career in administration in the mid-twelfth century needed literacy, especially when his lord was a man like Earl Robert of Leicester, chief justiciar of England from 1155 to 1168, a man known to have been not merely literate, but to have had more than a passing interest in theology, astrology, and philosophy.¹¹ Geoffrey came from a dynasty of Anglo-Norman administrators, and from an environment where literacy had a cash value.¹² When Geoffrey was a boy and a young man, in the first quarter of the twelfth century, literacy amongst knightly families was still a minority pursuit, so his facility with letters as a child might well have drawn comment, but the comment may not necessarily have been unfriendly. The boy Gerald of Wales, who made cathedrals in the sands of Manorbier while his brothers made castles, was called affectionately 'my bishop' by his fond father.¹³

The impression of Geoffrey's seal at Durham is in fact some good evidence that he did not take the metonymy too much amiss, as he chose to allude to it. The seal possesses a single face. It is a typical mid-twelfth-century aristocratic seal in size, round, and about 60 mm in diameter. Its typicality is in fact part of the joke. It mocks what was already by the 1140s a well-established status item amongst the aspiring knightly group in society. In this case even the colour of the wax used and the brown varnish applied to the surface adds to its routine appearance. Varnished white wax seal impressions were routinely appended by the scriptorium to acts of the Earl of Leicester; it was the official house-style in the Leicester household from the 1130s through to the 1160s.

The design of the seal is another example of the way that the seal is intended to subvert expectations. It depicts the donor as a stock equestrian knight in armour, in this case facing to the left of the seal. The armed equestrian effigy had

¹¹ Crouch, *Beaumont Twins*, pp. 207–11.

¹² For the duties of lay officers, see comments in P. Brand, 'The Rise and Fall of the Hereditary Steward in English Ecclesiastical Institutions, 1066–1300', in *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays presented to Karl Leyser*, ed. by T. Reuter (London: Hambledon, 1992), pp. 145–62. For the rise of the literate professional administrator, see S. L. Waugh, 'From Tenure to Contract: Lordship and Clientage in Thirteenth-Century England', *English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), 811–39.

¹³ R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 28.

been adopted by northern French princes in the mid-eleventh century as an appropriate symbol of their status as rulers. One of the first surviving examples was that of William of Normandy, who is depicted on one face of his royal seal as a mounted knight bearing a gonfalon, a ducal symbol to allude to the fact that he was Duke of Normandy as well as King, as the written legend around the seal makes clear. Late eleventh-century equestrian effigies are generally depicted as carrying either gonfanons or swords. An exception is Earl Robert II of Leicester's, on which Geoffrey's is partly modelled (both effigies face to the left rather than the right, which latter is much more common), for the Earl is depicted as brandishing a lance, as also was the effigy of his father, the first Earl of Leicester.¹⁴ Overall, Geoffrey's seal is more accomplished and later in design than the Earl's, but the thing that makes it stand out above all else is that his effigy bears neither gonfalon, sword, or even lance: it carries a pastoral staff.

It was clearly Geoffrey's joke, not that of the seal's sculptor. And it was a good joke, if you were an administrator. It takes a familiar, stock image in wax, frequently seen swinging from files of parchment deeds in courts and archives, and subverts it. It was also a literate man's joke, as only the words of the seal's legend could explain it. At the time when it was commissioned, probably around 1140, the Leicester household was a centre of power in the kingdom.¹⁵ Earl Robert and his twin brother, Count Waleran of Meulan, were the dominant personalities at the court of King Stephen. They had engineered the promotion of their youngest brother, Hugh, to the earldom of Bedford. They had plotted the overthrow of Bishop Roger of Salisbury, the justiciar, and had used it as an opportunity to further other relatives and friends. Unfortunately, the landing of Earl Robert of Gloucester in England with the Empress Mathilda in September 1139 had taken some of the gloss off the twins' triumph, but it had led to the concession of the county of Hereford to Earl Robert, as an attempt to stem the

¹⁴ For the evolution of the twelfth-century great seal, see T. A. Heslop, 'English Seals from the Mid-Ninth Century to 1100', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 133 (1980), 14–16; Heslop, 'Seals', in *English Romanesque Art, 1066–1200*, ed. by G. Zarnecki and others (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1984), pp. 298–314, and see no. 371 for an image of and commentary on the Leicester seal.

¹⁵ A distinctive feature in the design is the attachment of streamers to the back of the helmet, as can be seen in the second seal of Waleran II of Meulan and Worcester, closely datable to 1139, and found in seals of the subsequent decade. For Waleran and his seal, see E. King, 'Waleran, Count of Meulan, Earl of Worcester (1104–1166)', in *Tradition and Change in the Central Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Chibnall*, ed. by D. E. Greenway, C. Holdsworth, and J. Sayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 165–76.

growing rebellion in the south-west. In 1140 and 1141, up until King Stephen's catastrophic defeat at Lincoln, the Leicester household was the place to be for any political opportunist. The l'Abbé seal is some evidence of the euphoria amongst the members of Earl Robert's household staff at the time.¹⁶

At another level again it was a good joke. Literate knights were not common in the early twelfth century, but they were getting commoner as schooling in letters became a standard part of the education of magnates and knights. In any magnate's household, there was a universal division between the clerical and the lay officials. Recent analyses of aristocratic twelfth-century noble households have concluded that an earl might support bodies of around forty retained officials and higher servants, apart from lesser attendants, with the number of clergy balanced by the number of retained and resident knights: about eight to ten in each case.¹⁷ There was a certain tension between lay and clerical elements within households. Peter of Blois, for instance, notes how the royal chaplains would be reluctant to travel on Sunday, while the knights and others rode about untroubled on the sabbath.¹⁸ To commission a seal effigy which deliberately undermined the lay-clerical divide in the noble household was very funny, at least for the layman. Geoffrey's literacy would have been of itself subversive in such a situation; it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he intended his seal to be in part a social comment on the decay of clerical specialism within society.

Geoffrey l'Abbé's seal effigy was a multivalent and humorous allusion to his own name, his own situation, and maybe to wider changes in society. It is very much humour rooted in the complications of identity: Geoffrey's identity as both knight and literate administrator; the identity aristocrats proclaimed on their seals; and the legal identity of written acts. Both these identities were the focuses of status in the twelfth century, and the case of Roger 'le Chaplain' of Bishops Stortford in Essex is very much an illustration of this. Roger also lived on the boundary between knighthood and clergy, but in a different way. In 1211 he was arrested by the sheriff's officers 'for pretending sometimes he was a

¹⁶ For the twins' period of hegemony at court, see D. Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen, 1135–1154* (London: Longman, 2000), pp. 72–103.

¹⁷ D. Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain, 1000–1300* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 293–98, and for the later period, C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 8–29.

¹⁸ Peter of Blois, *Epistolae*, in *Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latinae*, ed. by Jacques Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Parisiis, 1844–90), 207, col. 43.

knight, and sometimes a priest'.¹⁹ Roger clearly wanted to enjoy status and its advantages, and was perfectly prepared to masquerade as a member of either order, as it suited him. We may assume that he did so for no good purpose: neither knights nor clergy paid toll at bridges and town gates, for instance. His cognomen 'le chaplain' was clearly awarded because of his little weakness, not because he actually was a junior clergyman. It is an interesting parallel to the way that Geoffrey was called 'l'abbé'.

One thing that the humour of the l'Abbé seal was not intended to be was anticlerical. The past two decades have witnessed something of a shift in interpretations of medieval laypeople's conduct towards secular ones, and there has been a realization that medieval conduct could on occasion be indifferent towards clerical ideals of culture. Knights in particular have come under investigation as the sources of a supposed medieval counterculture. The suggested sources of this are supposed to be, in the case of Stephen Jaeger's reinterpretation of lay conduct, the revived study of the humanistic learning of the Ancient World. In the case of the British historians of chivalry, Maurice Keen and John Gillingham, the secular mainspring is supposed to have been the internal ethics of a warrior class, ethics which stressed mercy to fallen enemies for pragmatic rather than religious reasons. Georges Duby's particular, striking contribution to the debate was the discovery of a heedless and hedonistic cult of youth amongst early twelfth-century knights and magnates.²⁰ There has always been space to allow secular explanations in the study of medieval knightly conduct. Indeed, from the time of the earliest writers on chivalry — Jean-Baptiste de la Curne de Sainte-Palaye in France and Charles Mills in England — the assumption has been that there was a powerful lay culture amongst medieval warriors, which the Church moderated and evangelized.²¹

¹⁹ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reigns of Richard I and John*, ed. by C. T. Flower, vol. VI (London: HMSO, 1932), p. 146.

²⁰ The works referred to here are the following: C. S. Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1985); M. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); J. Gillingham, 'Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Britain', *Haskins Society Journal*, 4 (1992), 67–84; G. Duby, 'Les jeunes dans la société aristocratique dans la France du Nord-Ouest au XII^e siècle', repr. in *La société chevaleresque* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), pp. 129–42.

²¹ For an overview of the historiography, see D. Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in Britain and France, 900–1300* (London: Longman, 2005), ch. 1.

Although current scholarship is looking to find secular imperatives for noble conduct, it rarely goes so far as to devalue religious ones, although it sometimes seems to wish to sidestep them. But there has been at least one serious suggestion that twelfth-century knightly culture was not just secular, but insular and seriously anticlerical. In 1982, Peter Noble presented an analysis of twelfth-century epic literature set in the Carolingian period. His analysis revealed a common attitude of indifference to clergy and to the strictures of the Church. In some cases indifference becomes downright hostility, with the clergy ranked in terms of status with that of serfs, and treated with contempt. Monks are loathed, but hermits at least are given a little more respect. Noble concludes that this reflects a world where knights and clergy are often active rivals for power and wealth. He sees knights as men of action with a natural contempt towards the lazy and useless clerical proletariat, but insecure about the superior knowledge the clerk possesses.²²

Noble seems to conclude that his analysis holds good for twelfth-century society as much as for the fictional society that twelfth-century poets created. But there are some very large objections to his views. The most basic one is in fact literary. The epics he took as his social data all are set in a particular era, the age of Charles Martel and Charlemagne, when the Franks were dominant over a weak and unimpressive papacy. It was an age notorious as one where the Frankish king pillaged and confiscated the estates of the Gallican church. When poets evoked it, they could hardly have found one which was more likely to predispose the narrative to anticlericalism. If he had taken the Arthurian epic as his study, with its growing interest in divine and mystical power manifested in the mundane world, one wonders whether his analysis would have been somewhat different.

Further objections relate to Noble's presuppositions about twelfth-century society. The only historian he quotes in his support is Marc Bloch, who died in 1944. Bloch's *La Société féodale* was a great work of history, but deep movements in medieval social historiography had happened in France and Britain that had made it redundant as an authoritative text by the 1960s. Furthermore, since one of Bloch's principal source texts for social conditions was the Carolingian epic *Raoul de Cambrai*, it is also hardly surprising that its conclusions tallied so neatly with Noble's own. Noble fails to heed several counter-arguments to his own

²² P. Noble, 'Anti-Clericalism in the Feudal Epic', in *The Medieval Alexander Legend and Romance Epic: Essays in Honour of David J. A. Ross*, ed. by P. Noble, L. Polak, and C. Isoz (Nendeln: Kraus, 1982), pp. 150–58.

thesis. The first is his ready assumption that clergy and knights formed social 'classes', which in a Marxian way he assumes must have been conflictual in their materialistic competition for resources. But the historiography of the 1970s already knew that knights were not a class in any accepted sense of what a class is. In fact knights formed an economically diverse status group which in the twelfth century was in the process of collapsing as its poorer members were being excluded from noble status.²³ The clergy and knights alike were not part of any hierarchical social structure; they were wide occupational groups defined only by rites of passage. Both contained minorities who possessed noble birth and noble status, and had more in common with each other than with the poorer members of their own groups. How in any case could knights be uniformly anticlerical when their own brothers and children were clerks? Geoffrey l'Abbé is a case in point. In the charter to which his seal was appended appears as witness *Gaufrido clerico filio eius*. This was the Geoffrey l'Abbé who was rector of his father's church of Burton Hastings, Warwickshire, in the 1160s.²⁴

Relations between clergy and laity were complex. The clergy themselves perceived and sometimes experienced hostility. An unfortunate Norman monk of Fécamp was sent to England early in the 1160s with a mission to recover some benefit from the abbey's neglected Oxfordshire lands around the village of Cogges. There, amongst other problems, he found that the head of the minor baronial Arsic family, which had made the original grants to Fécamp, was making no secret of its intention to take them all back again. In Manasses Arsic was indeed the sort of knight Peter Noble thought typical of the twelfth century, in direct competition with the clergy for limited resources.²⁵ As another example of perceived antimonasticism we find the anecdote told by Jacques de Vitry, himself a bishop and cardinal. A knight had taken a ransom from a poor colleague on the security of his own word and 'in the name of the Lord'. Riding out to meet the poor knight for payment of the ransom on the appointed day, the knight was kicking his heels at the meeting place because the man was late and saw a well-mounted monk approaching. As he trotted up, the knight grabbed the monk's bridle and demanded to know who was his lord. The alarmed monk replied that

²³ See historiographical summaries in T. Hunt, 'The Emergence of the Knight in France and England, 1000–1200', in *Knighthood in Medieval Literature*, ed. by W. H. Jackson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1981), pp. 1–22; Crouch, *Image of Aristocracy*, pp. 120–48.

²⁴ BL, Additional Charter 48038.

²⁵ '*Epistolae Fiscannenses: lettres d'amitié, de gouvernement et d'affaires*', ed. by J. Laporte, *Revue Mabillon*, 43 (1953), 30.

he had no lord other than God. 'Right,' said the knight, 'your lord, to whose household you belong and whose servant you say you are, is my pledge, so I am taking satisfaction from him.' He pushed the monk off the horse, forgave the poor knight his ransom, and rode off with it.²⁶

There was a more general feeling of tension evident in society than these specifically antimonastic examples told by the clergy themselves. In September 1139, the great ecclesiastical dignitaries of Hainault were gathering for the consecration of the new Premonstratensian abbey church of Vicoigne, near Valenciennes. They arrived hot and flustered having been mocked, and possibly threatened, by groups of knights from Artois and the Laonnais, who were gathering for a tournament nearby, presumably with the local Hennuyers. The offended clergy were grimly delighted to hear that the next day, the tournament organizer ('the chief of the rioters') had been accidentally killed in the *mêlée*.²⁷ These pieces of anecdotal evidence all come from the clergy themselves and are good evidence that they perceived that lay aristocrats could on occasion be hostile and troublesome. But they are also evidence that such harassment as there was was trivial and at a very low level. It is little different from the generalized tension amongst clergy felt against other clergy, particularly those clergy whose social origins were humble. Walter Map, canon of Oxford and Lincoln, delivered himself in the 1180s of a bitter diatribe against clergy from peasant origins. At the end of that decade, a writer associated with the court of Richard the Lionheart suggested that commissions should assess the birth and family of each candidate for ordination.²⁸

Then there are the examples of the minor harassment experienced by noblemen who were also clerics, who changed orders or hesitated about choosing one way of life over the other. Take the example of Earl Gilbert Marshal of Pembroke, who had been brought up to be a cleric, but came to the earldom because of the tragic early deaths of his brothers, so he took the field in a tournament at Ware in Hertfordshire determined to prove something: 'Earl Gilbert,' said the historian-monk, Matthew Paris, 'was all the more eager to earn this praise because his first vocation was as a clergyman, and common gossip had it that he

²⁶ *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. by T. F. Crane (New York, 1890), pp. 30–31.

²⁷ *Historia monasterii Viconiensis*, ed. by I. Heller, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum*, vol. XXIV (Hannover, 1879), p. 299.

²⁸ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. and trans. by M. R. James, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 12; *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, ed. by L. Brandin, 2 vols, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age*, 19, 25 (Paris: Champion, 1923–24), II (1924), vv. 11306–23.

was inexperienced and useless as a knight.²⁹ There were certainly young aristocrats in the late twelfth century who had taken minor orders, yet still lived the noble life and even married. We know this because a decretal of Honorius III mentions the Pope being solicited by a young cleric who was living the lay life of a knight, asking that he might not have to wear the tonsure that shamed him amongst his fellow knights.³⁰

From these examples, and indeed from Noble's own, it could be said that knights were not so much anticlerical as determined to assert their own distinctive identity and authority within society, all the more so because knights formed a group whose members were seeking to rise against other groups they perceived as lesser in status. The clergy was simply a group against which the knights could measure themselves. In fact clergy came in for a lot less abuse than the other rivals to the knights for status, the wealthy urban elites.³¹ This tension most commonly showed itself in the sort of mockery we have seen above, sometimes malicious and boisterous, and sometimes frankly humorous. The most intriguing of these come from the aristocratic hastiludes of the thirteenth century. In 1226 a knight with the suitable name of von Himmelberg chose to attend a joust at Feldkirchen in Carinthia so as to encounter the elaborately disguised Ulrich von Liechtenstein. Von Himmelberg countered Ulrich's disguise as 'Queen Venus' by appearing with his armour covered by a monastic habit, and a tonsured wig over his helmet. Ulrich, perhaps nettled at being upstaged, refused the joust with a monk: 'knightly sport was not for people of his sort'. When von Himmelberg persisted, Ulrich became annoyed and several times refused to meet him, until other knights interceded, and eventually they met. The 'monk' was laid out unconscious, but Ulrich awarded him a ring as a token of his valour.³² Something of the same occurred at Boston in 1288, when a party of squires donned the robes of monks in order to fight in a bohort (a play tournament for the young) another

²⁹ Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. by H. R. Luard, 7 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1884–87), IV (1877), 135–36.

³⁰ Mentioned in J. Dunbabin, 'From Clerk to Knight: Changing Orders', in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood*, vol. II, ed. by C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988), p. 31.

³¹ Crouch, *Birth of Nobility*, ch. 7.

³² Ulrich von Liechtenstein, *Service of Ladies*, trans. by J. W. Thomas. University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, 63 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 124–28.

party dressed in the black and white robes of Augustinian canons.³³ In both these examples the intention is simply to amuse the onlookers by the bizarre sight of monks and canons jousting, not to criticize clergy. It was exactly the same sort of playfulness with identity as is shown by Geoffrey l'Abbé's humorous seal.

The name 'l'Abbé' became a surname in the next generation. His eldest son, Sir Richard l'Abbé of Empingham and Tournay was *Ricardus Abbas* in his frequent appearances in late twelfth-century documents in the English Midlands and Central Normandy. His second son, Sir Geoffrey l'Abbé of Oadby was likewise an *abbas*, while Geoffrey's third son, the clerk, appears as *Galfridus Abbet* before 1163.³⁴ Being now a surname, *abbas* lost the relevance and immediate meaning that it had had to their father. The family founder's humour might have been continued in the family by a punning allusion in its thirteenth-century heraldry, but unfortunately none survives for the l'Abbés. The Empingham branch died out in the 1240s and the Oadby branch died out in the 1250s. The fate of living medieval humour was often to fall into dessication as a heraldic pun.

³³ *The Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough*, ed. by H. Rothwell, Camden Society, 3rd series, 89 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1957), pp. 224–25.

³⁴ See references in *Curia Regis Rolls*, I, 73; London, British Library, Additional Charters, 47582, 48038.

LES AVATARS D'UNE FACÉTIE DE CICÉRON

Gianni Mombello

A la fin du chapitre VI de ses *Essais sur le rire et le sourire des Latins*, consacré tout spécialement à l'étude des plaisanteries cicéroniennes, Eugène de Saint-Denis se demandait ironiquement: 'A quand le cours d'urbanité? à quand le certificat d'études littéraires humoristiques?'¹ Il semble que ce souhait provocatoire ait été pris à la lettre par les stratèges de la politique universitaire de certains pays, où les cours d'études 'humoristiques' foisonnent, ce qui ne fait pas rire les professeurs qui y ont été embrigadés de gré ou de force et surtout qui fait pleurer les étudiants, lorsqu'ils s'aperçoivent d'avoir gâché quelques années de leur jeunesse.

Mais quittons vite la polémique sur ce sujet délicat pour ne pas glisser des idées sombres dans ces *Mélanges* dédiés à M. Brian Levy, un fin humoriste qui débordait toujours de vitalité et de gaieté contagieuses et surtout un médiéviste très apprécié.

Le rire qui est, et non seulement pour Rabelais, 'le propre de l'homme',² a toujours intrigué les penseurs et les tentatives pour saisir en profondeur le mystère qui entoure ce phénomène ont été innombrables. La bibliographie qui le concerne est tellement vaste qu'elle défie l'opiniâtreté des bibliographes les plus courageux. Pour ce qui est du Moyen Âge je me bornerai donc à citer l'excellente

¹ Eugène de Saint-Denis, *Essais sur le rire et le sourire des latins*, Publications de l'Université de Dijon, 32 (Paris: Société Les Belles Lettres, 1965), p. 125.

² François Rabelais, *Gargantua*, Première édition critique faite sur l'*Editio princeps* [. . .], éd. par Ruth Calder, avec introduction, commentaires, tables et glossaire par Michael A. Screech, préface par Verdun-Louis Saulnier, Textes Littéraires Français, 163 (Genève: Droz; Paris: Minard, 1970), p. 7: '*Aux lecteurs*', v. II.

thèse de Philippe Ménard,³ ainsi que les actes d'un colloque récent (1998) sur ce sujet.⁴ Bien avant, en l'an de grâce 1900, Henri Bergson nous avait déjà livré la 'formule pharmaceutique' du mot d'esprit. La voici:

Prenez le mot, épaississez-le d'abord en scène jouée, cherchez ensuite la catégorie comique à laquelle cette scène appartiendrait: vous réduirez ainsi le mot d'esprit à ses plus simples éléments et vous aurez l'explication complète.⁵

N'étant pas pharmacien, j'ai du mal à réaliser cette préparation, mais le mot 'scène' me semble important. En effet, en enchaînant sur la différence qu'il y a entre le 'comique' et le 'spirituel', le philosophe y découvre le même rapport qu'il y a 'entre une scène faite et la fugitive indication d'une scène à faire'. En somme, l'esprit ne serait que du 'comique volatilisé'. Mais, dans cet essai dense et perspicace il y a, tout de suite après les considérations que je viens de rappeler sommairement, une remarque qui semble faite exprès pour illustrer la facétie dont il va être question. En effet, pour Bergson, 'il n'y a pas de différence essentielle entre un mot comique et un mot d'esprit', parce que, à son avis 'le mot d'esprit, quoique lié à une figure de langage, évoque l'image confuse ou nette d'une scène comique'.⁶

Pour qu'il y ait une scène il faut qu'il y ait des acteurs, et nous voilà plongés *in medias res*, mon but étant celui de poser quelques jalons attestant la longue survie et les transformations subies par une facétie cicéronienne.

Si le noyau du plaisant motif dont je vais parler est resté intact au cours des siècles, les personnages et le décor ont été notablement modifiés. Le but que je me propose est celui de souligner ces variations et d'enrichir la liste des témoignages littéraires que Peter Koj avait déjà fournie dans un article de 1968,⁷ ainsi que Kurt Ranke, en 1977.⁸

³ Philippe Ménard, *Le Rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Âge (1150–1250)*, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 105 (Genève: Droz, 1969).

⁴ *Risus Mediaevalis: Laughter in Medieval Literature and Arts*, éd. par Herman Braet, Guido Latré, et Werner Verbeke, Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, series 1, Studia 30 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003).

⁵ Henri Bergson, *Œuvres* [. . .], éd. par A. Robinet, introduction par Henri Gouhier, Edition du Centenaire (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p. 438.

⁶ Ibid., p. 439.

⁷ Peter Koj, 'Die Frau im Feigenbaum: Zur Geschichte einer Fazetie Ciceros', *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, 19 (1968), 53–66.

⁸ Cf. sa notice sur les *Gesta Romanorum* parue dans l'*Enzyklopädie des Märchens, Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*, éd. par Kurt Ranke et

La première attestation connue remonte au *De oratore* de Cicéron. Au chapitre 69 (§ 278) du deuxième livre de cet ouvrage écrit vers l'an 55 avant Jésus-Christ, on lit ce qui suit:⁹

Il y a beaucoup de sel à laisser deviner l'intention malicieuse, sans la montrer à découvert. Tel est ce mot d'un Sicilien, à qui l'un de ses amis disait tristement que sa femme s'était pendue à un figuier: 'Je t'en prie, donne-moi des boutures de ton arbre, afin que je les plante'.	Slasa sunt etiam, quae habent suspicionem ridiculi absconditam. Quo genere est Siculi illud: cui quom familiaris quidam quereretur quod diceret uxorem suam suspendisse se de ficu: 'Amabo te, inquit, da mihi ex ista arbore quos seram surculos'.
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Si le seul personnage identifié est un Sicilien c'est parce que, selon Cicéron, ils excellaient dans la plaisanterie.¹⁰ On en déduit, donc, que son interlocuteur était sicilien lui aussi.

Parmi les éléments qui composent le décor de ce passage, il y a un figuier, un arbre qui pousse partout dans la région méditerranéenne, mais dont les branches sont cassantes, d'où la première question. Peut-on se pendre à un figuier? Il semble bien que oui, du moins dans la tradition classique. Voici ce que Plutarque rapporte dans sa *Vie d'Antoine* à propos du misanthrope Timon:

Ce Timon était un Athénien qui vécut à peu près au temps de la guerre du Péloponnèse, ainsi qu'on peut le présumer d'après les comédies d'Aristophane et de Platon, qui le représentent comme un bourru et un misanthrope [. . .]. On raconte qu'un jour où les Athéniens étaient réunis en assemblée, il monta à la tribune; le silence s'étant établi et la curiosité étant grande à cause de la nouveauté du fait, il dit: 'Je possède, Athéniens, un petit terrain à bâtir, où a poussé un figuier auquel plusieurs citoyens déjà se sont pendus: comme je vais construire à cet endroit, j'ai voulu vous en prévenir publiquement, afin que, si par hasard quelques-uns d'entre vous ont envie de s'y pendre, ils le fassent avant que le figuier ne soit coupé.'¹¹

autres, 10 vols parus (vol. X: *Nibelungenlied · Proceßmotive*) (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter, 1977-2002), I (1977), cols 1377-79.

⁹ Cicéron, *De l'orateur*, éd. et trad. par Edmond Courbaud (pour le troisième livre: éd. par Henri Bornecque, trad. par Edmond Courbaud et Henri Bornecque), Collection des Universités de France, 3 vols (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1950), II, 123.

¹⁰ Ibid., II, 96, livre II, chap. 54, § 217: 'Inueni autem ridicula et salsa multa Graecorum — nam et Siculi in eo genere et Rhodii et Byzantii et praeter ceteros Attici excellunt.'

¹¹ Plutarque, *Vies*, vol. XIII: *Démétrios – Antoine*, éd. et trad. par Robert Flacelière et Emile Chambry, Collection des Universités de France (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1977), pp. 169-70.

Ce passage de Plutarque a été connu en France surtout par la traduction d'Amyot¹² et il a fourni à Shakespeare le sujet d'un drame qu'il composa au cours de sa crise existentielle des années 1607–1608.¹³

Un siècle avant Plutarque, Quintilien rappelait, d'après Cicéron, notre historiette, aux paragraphes 87–88 du chapitre 3 du livre VI de son *Institutio oratoria*¹⁴ sans toutefois attribuer à un Sicilien la repartie piquante au mari éploré, ou faussement éploré:

Mais il y a aussi plusieurs autres façons de détourner le sens d'une pensée, c'est, lorsqu'elle est sévère, de l'infléchir vers une atténuation [. . .]. Toutes proches sont les plaisanteries qui reposent sur une insinuation, tel cet exemple rapporté par Cicéron: 'Un homme se plaignait que sa femme se fût pendue à un figuier: "Je t'en prie", dit quelqu'un, "donne-m'en un scion, que j'en fasse une greffe"'; on comprend bien en effet ce qui n'est pas dit en clair.

Sed auerti intellectus et aliter solet, cum ab asperioribus ad leniora deflectitur [. . .]. Ei confine est quod dicitur per suspicionem, quale illud apud Ciceronem querenti quod uxor sua ex fico se suspendisset: 'Rogo des mihi surculum ex illa arbore ut inseram'; intelligitur enim quod non dicitur.

¹² Plutarque, *Les Vies des hommes illustres: Traduction de Jacques Amyot*, éd. par Gérard Walter. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), II, 934, § XCI: 'Ce Timon était un citoyen d'Athènes, lequel avait vécu environ la guerre du Péloponèse, comme l'on peut juger par les comédies de Platon et d'Aristophane, dans lesquelles il est moqué et touché comme malveillant et ennemi du genre humain, fuyant et abhorrant toute compagnie et communication des autres hommes [. . .]. L'on dit qu'un jour comme le peuple était assemblé sur la place pour ordonner de quelque affaire, il monta à la tribune aux harangues, comme faisaient ordinairement les orateurs quand ils voulaient haranguer et prêcher le peuple; si y eut grand silence, et chacun était très attentif à ouïr ce qu'il voudrait dire, à cause que c'était une chose bien nouvelle et bien étrange que de le voir en chaire; à la fin il commença à dire: "Seigneurs Athéniens, j'ai en ma maison une petite place, où il y a un figuier auquel plusieurs se sont déjà pendus et étranglés, et pour autant que j'y veux faire bâtir, je vous en ai bien voulu avertir devant que faire couper le figuier, à celle fin que si quelques-uns d'entre vous se veulent pendre, qu'ils se dépêchent"[. . .].'

¹³ William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, éd par Peter Alexander (London: Collins, 1962; 1951), pp. xix–xxi et, pour le texte, pp. 940–68.

¹⁴ Quintilien, *Institution oratoire*, tome IV, livres VI et VII, éd. et trad. par Jean Cousin, Collection des Universités de France (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres), p. 57.

Au troisième siècle après Jésus-Christ, Diogène Laërce faisait une allusion à cette anecdote dans ses *Vitae philosophorum*, en l'attribuant à Diogène le Cynique. Dans ce cas, il n'y a pas d'interlocuteurs et l'arbre auquel, non pas une, mais plusieurs femmes se sont pendues, n'est plus un figuier, mais un olivier. Je tire ce bref passage de la traduction humaniste d'Ambrogio Taversari:¹⁵ 'Cum [Diogenes] uidisset aliquando mulieres ex oliuæ arboræ pendere suffocatas: "Utinam, inquit, arbores cæteræ fructum huiusmodi tulissent".'¹⁶

Les rapports entre cette boutade attribuée à Diogène et notre petit conte sont évidents, mais Dominique Peter Rotunda et Stith Thompson ont bien fait de leur attribuer deux entrées différentes dans leur *Motif-Index*.¹⁷ En effet, c'est le petit sketch cicéronien qui a eu le plus de succès et surtout qui a donné lieu à de nombreuses variations et à des développements parfois assez importants.

A ce point il est presque superflu de rappeler que cette facétie ne pouvait trouver de place dans la tradition hébraïque ou chez les écrivains chrétiens des premiers siècles.

Le figuier et l'olivier sont des arbres connotés très positivement dans l'Ancien Testament à tel point que, dans l'apologue raconté par Yotan dans le livre des Juges (9. 7–11), ils sont requis par les autres plantes pour être leur roi. D'ailleurs, le seul arbre du Paradis Terrestre à être expressément nommé est justement le figuier, dont les feuilles ont servi à Adam et à Ève pour cacher leur nudité. En effet, le pommier de la tradition iconographique n'est désigné que par les

¹⁵ Sur cette traduction cf. Agostino Sottili, 'Il Laerzio latino e greco e altri autografi di Ambrogio Traversari', dans *Vestigia: Studi in onore di Giuseppe Billanovich*, éd. par Rino Avesani, Mirella Ferrari, Tino Foffano, Giuseppe Frasso, et Agostino Sottili, 2 vols (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984), II, 699–745.

¹⁶ Je cite ce passage d'après l'incunable 'Impressum Brixiae per Iacobum Britannicum Brixianum. Anno Domini .M CCCC.LXXXV. die .xxiii. Novembris' consulté sur l'exemplaire conservé à la Biblioteca Nazionale e Universitaria de Turin, cote: XV.II.82, fol. l', lignes 19–21, livre VI.

¹⁷ Dominique Peter Rotunda, *Motif-Index of the Italian Novella in Prose*, Indiana University Publications, Folklore Series, 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Bookstore, 1942), p. 60, nos. J 1442.14: *The cynic and the fig tree*, J 1442.14.1: *The cynic wish*. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, 6 vols (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), IV, 113, nos J 1442.11: *The cynic and the fig tree*, J 1442.11.1: *The cynic wish*. Cf. aussi: F. C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, FF Communications, 86.204 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1969), p. 376, n. 4978. Le renvoi à Morlini est inexact. Cf. Girolamo Morlini, *Novelle e favole*, éd. par Giovanni Villani (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 1983), pp. 98–101 pour la 'Novella' XXI.

expressions d'arbre de la connaissance du bien et du mal' (Genèse 2. 9), ou celle de 'l'arbre planté au milieu du jardin' (ibid. 3. 3). Dans la tradition occidentale, l'identification de cet arbre avec un pommier n'est pas antérieure au cinquième siècle après Jésus-Christ, tandis que dans la tradition orientale, on continue à l'identifier avec un figuier.¹⁸ Dans le Nouveau Testament, le figuier est souvent cité,¹⁹ mais, malgré la parabole du figuier maudit (Matthieu 21. 18–19, Marc 11. 12–14 et 20–21) et celle du figuier stérile (Luc 13. 6–9), l'arbre n'est nullement condamné en lui-même, non seulement parce que, dans le deuxième épisode cité, le serviteur dit au maître irrité d'accorder à l'arbre stérile une année de délai, avant que de l'abattre, mais surtout parce que, en ce qui concerne le premier, les exégètes pensent qu'il pourrait s'agir d'une méprise.²⁰ En effet, Jésus n'aurait pu trouver des figes mûres avant Pâques. L'évangéliste Marc, qui s'était bien rendu compte de l'in vraisemblance de cet épisode, là où la tradition probablement orale à laquelle il puisait le plaçait, ajoute: 'non enim erat tempus ficorum' (11. 13). Matthieu, qui raconte le même fait dans le même contexte chronologique (21. 18–20), enchaîne sur la nécessité d'avoir une foi solide (21. 21–22), ainsi que fait Marc un peu plus loin (11. 22–24). La malédiction du figuier sans fruits a donc un sens second, qui n'est pas aisé à identifier.²¹

La facétie, dont nous parlons, semble avoir pénétré dans la tradition littéraire chrétienne seulement au début du bas Moyen Âge. Le mérite en revient à Walter Map (v. 1136—entre 1208 et 1210), né au pays de Galles, mais qui a eu de nom-

¹⁸ *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, éd. par Engelbert Kirschbaum SJ, avec Günter Bandmann, Wolfgang Braunfels, Johannes Kollwitz†, Wilhelm Mrazek, Alfred A. Schmid, et Hugo Schnell, *Allgemeine Ikonographie*, 4 vols (Rom: Herder, 1968–72), 1 (1968), col. 123, article *Apfel* par Henk W. van Os. *Ikonographie der Heiligen, Begründet von Engelbert Kirschbaum SJ†*, éd. par Wolfgang Braunfels (Rom: Herder, 1973–76), vol. de cinq à huit.

¹⁹ *Grande lessico del Nuovo Testamento, Fondato da Gerhard Kittel, nuoto da Gerhard Friedrich*, édition italienne par Felice Montagnini, Giuseppe Scarpata, et Omero Soffritti, 16 vols (Brescia: Paideia, 1965–92), XII (1979), cols 1437–58, article de Claus-Hunno Hunzinger.

²⁰ Ibid., cols 1449–52.

²¹ Selon les exégètes contemporains, ce figuier représenterait les chefs de Jérusalem et les Juifs en général qui refusent de croire au Messie. Cf. *I quattro vangeli commentati: Strumento di lavoro per i gruppi biblici e per la preparazione liturgica* (Leumann: Editrice ELLEDICI, 2002), pp. 221 et 480–81. Il s'agit de la traduction italienne de *L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu*; *L'Évangile selon saint Marc*; *L'Évangile selon saint Luc*; *L'Évangile selon saint Jean*, Collection Écouter la Bible (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1984), un commentaire préparé par seize biblistes.

breux contacts avec la France, ayant été au service de Henri II Plantagenêt et de son chancelier Thomas Becket.²²

A la fin du deuxième chapitre de la quatrième *Distinctio* de son *De nugis curialium*, avant de reproduire le texte de sa *Dissuasio Valerii ad Ruffinum philosophum ne uxorem ducat*, il revendique la paternité de ce pamphlet anti-matrimonial²³ qu'il avait écrit quelques années avant 1180/81–1193, date présumée de la composition du *De nugis curialium*.²⁴

Cette épître a eu un succès considérable, puisqu'il nous en reste cinq commentaires différents,²⁵ et qu'elle a été accueillie parmi les œuvres anépigraphes de Saint Jérôme jusque dans la *Patrologia latina* de l'Abbé Migne.²⁶

Voici la nouvelle version de notre facétie fournie par la *Dissuasio*.

²² Walter Map, *Svaggi di corte*, éd. par Fortunata Latella, 2 vols (Parma: Pratiche Editrice, 1990), I, 27–28. Gautier Map, *Contes pour les gens de cour*, trad. avec une introduction par Alan Keith Bate, Témoins de notre histoire (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993). Cette dernière édition contient une fort bonne introduction (pp. 5–76), mais pas le texte latin. Je citerai donc l'édition Fortunata Latella.

²³ Walter Map, *Svaggi di corte*, II, 412–14: 'Amicum habui, uirum uite philosophice, quem post longa tempora multasque uisitaciones annotaui semel habitu, gestu, uultuque mutatum, suspriosum, pallidum, laucius, tamen cultum, loquentem parcius et grauius, insolita similitate superbum. Pristina perierat facecia morosaque iocunditas; egrum se dicebat, et male sanus erat. Soliuagum uidi, meaue quantum reuerencia mei sinebat declinantem alloquia. Veneris arrepticium uidi. Quicquid enim uidebatur, totum erat proci, nichil philosophi. Spes tamen erat, ut post lapsum resurgeret. Ignoscebam quod ignorabam; ludum putabam, et erat seuum serium. Vxorari tendebat, non amari; Mars nolebat fieri, sed Mulciber. Tamen michi mens excidit, et quia mori pergebat, commoriebar ei. Locutus sum et repulsus. Misi qui loquerentur, et ut noluit audire, dixi "Fera pessima deuorauit unicum meum". Et, ut omnes amicicie uices implem, epistolam ei scripsi, mutatis nominibus nostris, me qui Walterus sum Valerium uocans, ipsum qui Iohannes est et ruffus Ruffinum. Intitulavi epistolam sic: *Dissuasio Valerii ad Ruffinum philosophum ne uxorem ducat*.'

²⁴ Ibid., I, 28–29.

²⁵ Philippe Delhay, 'Le Dossier anti-matrimonial de l'*Adversus Jovinianum* et son influence sur quelques écrits latins du XII^e siècle', *Mediaeval Studies*, 13 (1951), 65–86 (p. 82, n. 30). A propos des plaintes que Walter Map fait d'avoir été dépossédé de la paternité de ce pamphlet par un certain Hugo de Folieto, cf. ibid., pp. 82–84. Selon Philippe Delhay, Hugues de Fouilloy (v. 1100–v. 1172–74), qui a écrit un *De nuptiis* (*Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latinae* (PL), éd. par Jacques Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Parisiis, 1844–90), 176, cols 1201–18), même s'il a connu le *De nugis curialium* et la *Dissuasio*, n'a nullement pillé Walter Map. De toute manière notre facétie ne figure pas dans ce traité.

²⁶ PL, 30, cols 254–61. Epistola xxxvi: *Valerius Rufino ne ducat uxorem*.

Pacuvius flens ait Arrio uicino suo: 'Amice, arborem habeo in orto meo infelicem, de qua se prima uxor mea suspendit, et postmodum secunda, et iam nunc tertia'. Cui Arrius: 'Miror te in tantis successibus lacrimas invenisse', et iterum: 'Dii boni, quot dispendia tibi arbor illa suspendit!' et tercio: 'Amice, dede michi de arbore illa surculos quos seram'. Amice, et ego tibi dico, metuo ne et te oporteat arboris illius surculos mendicare cum inueniri non poterunt.²⁷

Par rapport aux rédactions précédentes, les nouveautés sont nombreuses. Puisque nous sommes en Angleterre, le figuier a disparu, en revanche les femmes qui se pendent sont trois et non plus une seulement, enfin les deux interlocuteurs ont un nom: Pacuvius et Arrius. Fort probablement Walter Map, ou sa source, a tiré des *Noctes atticae* (XIII, I, II) d'Aulu-Gelle les noms de ces deux auteurs de tragédies qui s'étaient rencontrés à Tarente pour parler de leur activité poétique.²⁸ Le nom du deuxième interlocuteur a été estropié, puisqu'il s'appelait Accius et non pas Arrius. Même s'il s'agit ici de noms de fantaisie, ces deux auteurs ont bel et bien existé.²⁹

Le passage de la *Dissuasio*, qu'on vient de citer, a été transcrit, presque mot pour mot, par Pierre de Blois (v. 1135–v. 1204) dans une épître qu'il avait adressée à un de ses amis diacre qui avait décidé de se marier, avec la seule omission du nom du voisin de Pacuvius.³⁰

L'allusion que l'on trouve dans un des *Sermones communes* de Jacques de Vitry (1160–70 – I^{er} mai 1240) semble remonter à une tradition un peu différente, puisque les femmes qui se sont pendues sont seulement deux.³¹

²⁷ Walter Map, *Svaggi di corte*, II, 428.

²⁸ Auli Gelli, *Noctium Atticarum libri XX*, éd. par Martinus Hertz, 2 vols (Berolini: Wilhelm Hertz, 1883–85), I (1883), 128–29: *Super poetarum Pacuvii et Accii conloquio familiari in oppido Tarentino*.

²⁹ *Der kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike, Auf der Grundlage von Paulys Realencyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, unter mitwirkung zahlreicher Fachgelehrter bearbeitet und herausgegeben von K. Ziegler und W. Sontheimer*, 5 vols (Stuttgart: Alfred Druckenmüller Verlag, 1964–75), I (1964), cols 28–30 pour Accius et IV (1967), cols 400–01 pour Pacuvius.

³⁰ PL, 207, cols 243–47. Epistola LXXIX: *Ad R. amicum suum*, col. 246: 'Pacuvius flens ait vicino suo: "Amice, arborem habeo in horto meo infelicissimam a qua suspendit se prima uxor mea, quam habui; ab eadem secunda uxor mea elegit suspendium. Ab eadem suspendit se et tertia." Cui respondit amicus: "Miror te in tantis successibus lacrymas invenisse." Et idem: "Dii boni, arbor illa, a quot dispendiis te suspendit, da mihi surculos de arbore tua, ut in mortem uxoris meae vivificetur et crescat." Hæc arbor tibi necessaria esset.'

³¹ Goswin Frenken, *Die Exempla des Jacob von Vitry. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Erzählliteratur des Mittelalters*, Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie

Au cours de la première moitié du XIV^e siècle, les *Gesta Romanorum*³² reviennent à la tradition de Walter Map. Elymandus, auteur supposé de ce recueil, selon le *Dialogus creaturarum*,³³ attribue en effet cette facétie à Valerius. Les noms des deux interlocuteurs sont ici Peratinus et Arrius. Le premier s'adresse à son fils et à tous ses voisins pour leur raconter ses malheurs, ce qui est un ajout doublement invraisemblable. Le deuxième se montre philanthrope. Voici ce passage tiré du chapitre 33:

Refert Valerius, quod homo quidam nomine Peratinus flens dixit filio suo et omni-bus vicinis suis: Heu, heu michi! habeo in orto meo arborem infelicem, qua uxor mea prima se suspendit, postmodum secunda, modo tercia, et ideo dolor est michi miserabilis. Ait unus, cui nomen Arrius: Miror, te in tantis successibus lacrimas emisisse. Da michi, rogo te, tres surculos illius arboris, quia intendo inter vicinos dividere, ut quilibet arborem habeat ad uxorem suam suspendendam. Et sic factum est.³⁴

La genèse des *Gesta Romanorum* est des plus embrouillées³⁵ et il n'est pas le cas de s'y arrêter ici, non plus que sur sa diffusion qui a été considérable. Qu'il suffise de dire que ce recueil d'*exempla* semble avoir eu deux centres de diffusion: l'un continental (la région autour du lac de Constance)³⁶ et l'autre en Angleterre. Ce dernier est très important parce que le dominicain Robert Holcot, mort en

des Mittelalters [. . .], fünfter Band, erstes Heft. Vom Mittelalter und von der lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung - Oskar Beck, 1914), p. 131, n. LXVIII: 'De quodam alio audiui, qui habebat arborem in orto suo, in qua due eius uxores suspenderant semetipsas. Cui quidam eius vicinus ait: "Valde fortunata est arbor illa et bonum omen habet. Habeo autem uxorem pessimam, rogo te, da michi surculum ex ea, ut plantem in orto meo."'

³² Cf., entre autres, la notice de Udo Wawrzyniak sur les *Gesta Romanorum* parue dans l'*Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, v (1987), cols 1201-12 et l'ouvrage de Brigitte Weiske, *Gesta Romanorum*, vol. I: *Untersuchungen zu Konzeption und Überlieferung*, vol. II: *Texte, Verzeichnisse*, Fortuna Vitrea, 3 et 4 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1992), I, 203, n. 16 et passim.

³³ Pierre Ruelle, *Le Dialogue des créatures: Traduction par Colart Mansion (1482) du 'Dialogus creaturarum' (XIV^e siècle)*, Académie Royale de Belgique, Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques, Collection des Anciens Auteurs Belges (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1985), p. 189, Dialogue LXVIII, § 2068: 'Helynand raconte, es fais des Rommains [. . .]'.

³⁴ *Gesta Romanorum*, éd. par Hermann Oesterley (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1872), pp. 330-31.

³⁵ Maximilian Krepinsky, 'Quelques remarques relatives à l'histoire des *Gesta Romanorum*', *Le Moyen Âge*, 2e série, 15 (1911), 307-18 et 346-67.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 361.

1349, a intégré, dans ses *Moralitates*,³⁷ certainement antérieures à 1342, date du plus ancien manuscrit des *Gesta Romanorum* (Innsbruck, Universitätsbibliothek, cod. lat. 310),³⁸ ainsi que dans son *Convertimini*, un recueil d'exhortations morales qui lui est attribuable avec un haut degré de vraisemblance,³⁹ notre facétie, ainsi que d'autres récits des *Gesta Romanorum*.

Vers 1520, l'imprimeur parisien Jean de La Garde a fait traduire en français cet ouvrage par un 'homme expert et litteré' et publia cette traduction en 1521 sous le titre de *Le Violier des histoires romaines*.⁴⁰ Ici, le Valerius de la source devient Valère le Grand et le premier éditeur moderne de ce texte, Gustave Brunet, a été bien étonné de ne rien avoir pu trouver de semblable dans les *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri IX* de Valère Maxime.⁴¹ Le mari éploré s'appelle ici Palatin.⁴²

³⁷ John Alexander Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols (London: Printed by order of the Trustees, 1910), III, 106–13. Description du MS Arundel 384, notre facétie est mentionnée ici sous le numéro 30, p. 110. Les volumes I et II de ce *Catalogue*, dus à Harry Leigh Douglas Ward, ont paru en 1883 et en 1893.

³⁸ *Die 'Gesta Romanorum': Nach der Innsbrucker Handschrift vom Jahre 1342 und vier Münchener Handschriften*, éd. par Wilhelm Dick, *Erlanger Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie*, 7 (Erlangen: Deichert, 1890).

³⁹ Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 116–36. Description du MS Royal 7.C.1. Notre facétie est mentionnée ici sous le numéro 8 (p. 199).

⁴⁰ *Le Violier des histoires romaines*, éd. par Geoffrey Hope, *Textes Littéraires Français*, 548 (Genève: Droz, 2002), pp. xix–xx.

⁴¹ *Le Violier des histoires romaines: Ancienne traduction françoise des 'Gesta Romanorum'*, nouvelle édn, revue et annotée par M. Gustave Brunet, *Bibliothèque Elzévirienne*, 75 (Paris: P. Jannet, 1858), p. 88, n. 2.

⁴² *Le Violier des histoires romaines*, éd. par Hope, p. 103 pour le texte et pp. 500–01 pour les notes: 'Valere le Grant recite que aucun homme nommé Palatin dist à son filz en plorant et à tous ses voisins:

– Helas! dist-il, j'ay en mon jardin ung arbre qui est improspere dedans lequel ma premiere femme se pendit, puis en apres la seconde, finalement la tierce. Pour la cause, j'en suis dolent.

Quelqung qui là estoit, Arrius nommé, luy dist:

– Je m'esbahys de tant de larmes que tu tires de tes yeulx pour tes fortunes. Donne moy, dist-il, de cet arbre malheureux trois graphons ou vergettes, affin que je les divise lors entre les voisins affin que chascun ait ung arbre de telle nature, si que sa femme là se pende.

Tout ainsi fut il fait.'

Les *Gesta Romanorum*, best-seller de la littérature médiévale, a été traduit aussi en anglais,⁴³ en allemand,⁴⁴ en russe, en polonais, en tchèque et en magyar.⁴⁵

Dans le cadre de cette contribution, il ne me sera pas possible de suivre la fortune de cette facétie dans tous ces domaines linguistiques. Mon propos se limitera donc aux textes écrits en italien, en français et, exceptionnellement, en latin. Il n'est pas toutefois possible de ne pas rappeler au moins que cette facétie a été connue de Chaucer⁴⁶ et qu'après les traductions, la tradition allemande a été inaugurée, en 1522, par Johannes Pauli,⁴⁷ relayé, en 1544, par Hans Sachs, qui a uni, dans un même texte, la boutade attribuée à Diogène le Cynique et notre facétie.⁴⁸

Les humanistes du XV^e siècle ont renoué avec la tradition classique. Le premier à citer est Ludovico Carbone, né probablement à Crémone en 1430 et mort à Ferrare le 6 février 1485.⁴⁹ L'œuvre de cet homme de lettres, qui a déployé une activité inlassable à la cour des seigneurs de Ferrare Borso (1413–1471), de Hercule I^{er} d'Este (1431–1505) et à l'Université de cette ville, est encore fort mal connue.

⁴³ *Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, formerly edited by Sir Frederic Madden for the Roxburghe Club, and now re-edited from the MSS. in the British Museum (Harl. 7333 and Addit. 9066) and University Library, Cambridge (kk: 1.6), avec introduction, notes et glossaire, etc., par Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS ES, 33 (London: Published for the Early English Text Society, by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1879; repr., 1898). D'après la table comparative des pp. xxix–xxxi, et l'appendice de cette édition (pp. 513 et 516, n. xxxiii), notre facétie ne figure pas dans les manuscrits anglais des *Gesta Romanorum*.

⁴⁴ Pour les nombreuses versions allemandes des *Gesta Romanorum*, cf. Gerd Dicke et Klaus Grubmüller, *Die Fabeln des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit: Ein Katalog der deutschen Versionen und ihrer lateinischen Entsprechungen*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 60 (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1987), pp. 792–93.

⁴⁵ Krepinsky, 'Quelques remarques relatives à l'histoire des *Gesta Romanorum*', p. 309.

⁴⁶ *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, éd. par Rev. Walter W. Skeat (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 574: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, vv. 757–64. Les deux protagonistes s'appellent ici Latumius et Arrius.

⁴⁷ *Johannes Pauli Schimpf und Ernst*, éd. par Johannes Bolte, vol. 1: *Die älteste Ausgabe von 1522*, vol. II: *Paulis Fortsetzer und Übersetzer: Erläuterungen* (Berlin: Herbert Stubenrauch Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), I, 353 pour le texte; II, 394–95 pour sa survie.

⁴⁸ *Sämtliche Fabeln und Schwänke von Hans Sachs*, éd. par Edmund Goetze, 6 vols (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1893–1913), III: *Die Fabeln und Schwänke in den Meistergesängen*, éd. par Edmund Goetze et Carl Drescher (1900), pp. 314–15, n. 155: *Die drey frauen feint*. Texte daté du 30 janvier 1544.

⁴⁹ Cf. la notice de Lao Paoletti dans le *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana; Graziano: Grassi Gondi, 1960–2002), XIX (1976), 699–70.

C'est lui qui a repris, dans ses *Facezie*, le motif qui nous occupe dans ses deux versions. La première, il l'a tirée du *De oratore* de Cicéron, puisque le Sicilien et le figuier réapparaissent et qu'il s'agit d'une seule femme qui s'est pendue:

Un siciliano, oldendo un'amico lamentarsi che la donna soa s'era impichata a un figaro,
- De, per Dio, dame qualche tagliolo di quest'arbore - dissegli, - ch'i' lo pianti.⁵⁰

Il a tiré la seconde version d'une tradition qui remonte vraisemblablement à Diogène Laërce, mais qui a subi bien des transformations. En effet, le bon mot qu'elle contient n'est plus attribué à Diogène, mais à Esope:

Esope, antichissimo fabulatore greco e molto piacevole, trovando un dì una femina apichata ad un arbore, disse: Dio volesse che tutti gl'arbore producesse (sic) tal frutti, perché di tutti gli animali, che genera la terra, l'aïere, l'aqua, non è niuno pe-zore de la femina.⁵¹

On revient à Walter Map avec Guillaume Tardif⁵² qui a traduit dans ses *Ditz des sages hommes* des extraits des *Rerum memorandarum libri* de Pétrarque, des *Vitae philosophorum* de Diogène Laërce, d'après la version d'Ambrogio Traversari exécutée entre 1424 et 1433,⁵³ et d'autres ouvrages médiévaux. Cet opuscule a été imprimé à la suite des trente-trois fables ésopiques traduites en latin par Lorenzo Valla et mises en français par le même Tardif.⁵⁴ Je cite ce texte d'après l'édition publiée à Paris, par Antoine Vérard, vers 1493 (fols [Dvii]^r a et b), conservée à la BnF sous la cote: Vélin 611:

Pacunius [*sic*], homme noble, pleuroit ung jour et se complaignoit a ung sien voisin, homme noble, nommé Arrius. Ledit Pacinius [*sic*] disoit a son dit voisin. 'J'ay ung arbre maleureux en mon jardin, ou quel ma premiere femme se pendit des long temps a, et depuis, par aucun intervalle de temps, ma seconde femme s'i est pendue, mais, qui pis

⁵⁰ *Fazecie di Lodovico Carbone ferrarese*, éd. par Abd-Le-Kader Slaza, Raccolta di rarità storiche e letterarie, 4 (Livorno: Raffaello Giusti Editore, 1900), p. 87 n. XLVI.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 87, n. XLVII,

⁵² Gianni Mombello, 'Les ditz des sages hommes de Guillaume Tardif: Aspects littéraires et linguistiques', dans *Etudes littéraires sur le XV^e siècle*, Actes du V^e Colloque International sur le Moyen Français, Milan, 6-8 mai 1985, vol. III, Contributi del Centro studi sulla letteratura medio-francese, 5 (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1986), pp. 199-216.

⁵³ Agostino Sottili, 'Il Laerzio latino e greco e altri autografi di Ambrogio Traversari', dans *Etudes littéraires sur le XV^e siècle*, II, 699-745.

⁵⁴ Pierre Ruelle, *Les 'Apologues' de Guillaume Tardif et les 'Facetiae morales' de Laurent Valla*, Centre d'Etudes Franco-Italien, Textes et études – Domaine français, 10, Corpus des fabulistes français des temps modernes, deuxième série: Textes et études, 1 (Genève: Éditions Slatkine, 1986), pp. 25-26 et passim.

est, ma tierce et derreniere femme s'i est pendue et defaict de nouveau'. Auquel ledit Arrius respondit: 'Je me esbahis comment tu peulx plourer, ne d'ou te peuent venir telz lermes, en si grant prosperité. O tant ledit arbre t'a pen-du et osté de riotés, de dommages et de calamités. Je te prie, mon Amy, donne moy des greffes dudit arbre, affin que je en puisse enter et planter en mon jardin. Car c'est ung arbre fructueux et prouffitable pour tous hommes mariés.'

Par ce est donné a entendre que, ainsi que c'est ung commencement de paradis a ung homme, qui a une femme de bien, de vivre avecques elle, pareillement, c'est ung droit enfer de vivre avecques la mauvaïse, et n'en doit l'en demander que la de-pesche.

Au début du XVI^e siècle, on retrouve une brève allusion à notre facétie au début du chapitre soixante dix-sept du second livre du *Libro del Cortegiano* (1508–16) de Baldassarre Castiglione (1478–1529):

Sono ancor arguti quei moti che hanno in sé una certa nascosa suspizion di ridere, come, lamentandosi un marito molto e piangendo sua moglie, che da se stessa s'era ad un fico impiccata, un altro se gli accostò e, tiratolo per la veste, disse: 'Fratello, potrei io per grazia grandissima aver un rametto de quel fico, per inserire in qualche albero dell'orto mio?'.⁵⁵

Malgré l'anonymat des deux protagonistes, la présence du figuier et le fait qu'il s'agit d'une seule femme qui s'est pendue, ce passage renvoie à Cicéron.

Erasmus a publié ses *Apophthegmata* à Bâle, Lyon et Paris, en 1531, donc peu d'années avant sa mort survenue en 1536. Cet ouvrage a eu un succès énorme surtout au cours du XVI^e siècle et il a été plusieurs fois traduit en français, en anglais, en italien, en castillan et en flamand.⁵⁶

Au livre trois, on trouve parmi les dits attribués à Diogène, sous le numéro XIX, la boutade que nous connaissons:

Quum aliquando vidisset mulieres ex oliva pendere laqueo præfocatas: *Utinam*, inquit, et cæteræ arbores similem ferrent fructum. Erat enim Diogenes, id est, mulierum osor, eoque cupiebat omnes videre pensiles.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Baldassarre Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, éd. par Ettore Bonora, commentaire par Paolo Zoccola, Grande Universale Mursia, n.s., 15 (Milano: Mursia, 1988), p. 183.

⁵⁶ Ferdinand Vander Haeghen, *Bibliotheca Erasmiana: Répertoire des œuvres d'Érasme* (Gand, 1893; 2^{ème} réimp., Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1972), pp. 15–19.

⁵⁷ Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami, *Opera omnia, emendatiora et avctiora, ex optimas editiones præcipue quas ipse Erasmus postremo curavit summa fide exacta, doctorumque virorum notis illustrata* [. . .], 10 vols (Lugduni Batavorum: Curâ et impensis Petri Vander Aa, 1703–06), IV, col. 183.

Comme on peut le constater aisément, cette citation suit d'assez près la version qu'Ambrogio Traversari avait donnée du passage de Diogène Laërce cité plus haut.

Au sixième livre on trouve, sous le numéro LXV de la série *Apophthegmata varie mixta*, cet autre texte:

Quidam deploranti quod uxor sua se de ficu suspendisset: *Rogo*, inquit, *des mihi surculum ex illa arbore ut inseram*: per suspicionem ludens, quum vellet intelligi sibi molestam esse uxorem.⁵⁸

La présence du figuier renvoie à la tradition cicéronienne.

Notre histoire avait reçu, entre-temps, un développement exceptionnel dans *Les Fantasies de Mere Sote* de Pierre Gringore dont l'*editio princeps* remonte aux années 1516–1518.⁵⁹

Ung homme fut conjoint par mariage à une femme assez jeune qui fut si plaine de sa volenté qu'elle eut fantasie ne obeyr jamais à son mary, car elle estoit fiere, despote et orgueilleuse. Son mary du commencement la traicta humainement, lui cuidant changer sa condition. Mais tant plus qu'il faisoit à son plaisir et tant plus estoit mauaise.

Advint ung jour, apres qu'il eut mis peine de la chastier par parolles et qu'il vit qu'il perdoit sa peine, lui fist plusieurs menaces, dont elle fut si fort despotee qu'elle s'enfuyt en ung jardin où il y avoit ung bel arbre, print une corde et se pendit en une branche.

Et ce voyant son mari pensa en sa fantasie qu'il trouveroit moyen en recouvre une aultre. Et de fait, pour la seconde fois espousa une autre femme qui fut si plaine de concupiscence charnelle et lybidineuse qu'elle ne escondissoit homme touchant le jeu de aimer, dont le mary se apperceut. Si se advisa qu'il n'y scauroit mettre reme-de fors l'enfermer en sa chambre et la garder de trotter par les rues et gaster le pavé; parquoy l'enferma par aucune espace de temps en une chambre. Toutesfois elle trouva une nuict facon d'eschapper secrettement, entra au jardin et se pendit avec la premiere femme.

Le mary, fort esbahy de ceste adventure, ne sceut que penser. Toutesfois sa fantasie fut se soy arrester à ung proverbe qu'on dit: *Toutes tierces sont bonnes*. Se delibera d'espouser encores une autre femme. Mais si la premiere fut fiere, despote et orgueilleuse, et la seconde plaine de concupiscence charnelle, la troisieme fut encores plus plaine de volupté mondaine, car toutes les sepmaines vouloit avoir vestemens nouveaulx. Et estoit impossible au mary scavoir entretenir si gros estat sans devenir povre et meschant. Si lui monstra au mieulx qu'il peut, disant pour la chastier qu'il avoit acheté de la marchandise et qu'il falloit vendre partie de ses habitz pour la payer,

⁵⁸ Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami, *Opera omnia, emendatiora et avctiora*, IV, col. 292.

⁵⁹ *Pierre Gringore's les Fantasies de Mere Sote*, éd. par Richard L. Frautschi, University of North Carolina, Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 38 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), pp. 23–24.

dont elle fut tresfort couroucee, disant qu'elle estoit bien de lieu venue pour porter tel estat, et sans considerer que son mary estoit de moyen estat.

Toutesfois advint ung jour que pour aucune debte que le mary devoit les sergents furent à la maison, qui prindrent les meilleurs robes qu'elle eust par execution. Or, l'endemain la femme estoit de nopces de l'une de ses parentes, eut fantasie que si elle se y trouvoit pouvrement accoustree que on s'en mocqueroit. Et aussi se ne [s'i] trouvoit, ce lui seroit honte et reproche; parquoy sa fantasie fut de aller au jardin et de soy pendre comme les autres femmes.

Le mary, voyant ses trois femmes ainsi pendues, fist plusieurs complaintes. S'adressa à ung sien filz et à plusieurs de ses voisins triste et melencolieux, et parla à eulx plorant, disant tel motz: - J'ay en mon jardin ung arbre bel et plaisant. Mais tant y a que ma premiere femme se y est pendue, la seconde aussi, et pareillement la tierce que me est une peine esmerveillable. Siouldrois bien avoir vostre conseil sur ce cas.

Or, les voisins à qui il faisoit ce recit estoyent mariez à femmes noysives et tenceresses. L'ung d'iceulx lui fist responce: — Tes trois femmes se sont pendues à trois branches de l'arbre. Je te prie, donne-moy une greffe de chascune branche, affin que j'en departe entre noz voysins qui avons mauvaises femmes. Si les planterons en noz jardins où le temps advenir nos femmes se pendront, qui nous sera ung grant reconfort et joye singuliere; parquoy me semble que as tort de plorer la perte de celles qui te tourmentoyent jour et nuict.

Le mary à qui ses femmes s'estoyent pendues alla en son jardin et print de chascune des trois branches ung syon et les bailla à l'ung de ses voysins qui se delibera les departir aux autres.⁶⁰

Malgré les très nombreux ajouts, que Gringore fait de son cru à ce récit, les mentions du fils et des voisins relient cette version à celle des *Gesta romanorum*, même si les noms du voisin qui interpelle le mari des trois femmes qui se sont pendues, ainsi que celui de ce dernier ne sont pas révélés, comme dans la source probable sinon directe de cette facétie. Sous la plume de Gringore, elle devient un véritable conte à rire. En effet, le triple veuf est présenté comme un parfait imbécile.

Cette nouvelle version de notre facétie a été reprise, presque mot pour mot, par Nicolas de Troyes dans *La quarante-unième nouvelle par le grenetier Du Pont* de son *Grand Parangon de nouvelles nouvelles*. L'unique manuscrit qui nous l'ait transmise, est conservé à la BnF, f. fr. 1510; il remonte à 1535–1537.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 185–87.

⁶¹ Nicolas de Troyes, *Le Grand Parangon des nouvelles nouvelles (Choix)*, Édition critique, avec introduction et notes par Krystyna Kasprzyk, Société des Textes Français Modernes, 150 (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1970), p. vii. Notre texte n'a pas été repris dans cette réédition. Krystyna Kasprzyk, *Nicolas de Troyes et le genre narratif en France au XVI^e siècle* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe; Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1963), p. 370.

D'ung homme qui eut trois femmes l'une après l'autre qui toutes trois se pendirent à un arbre le quel estoit en son jardin.

Ung homme fut conjoint par mariage à une femme assez jeune, qui fut si plaine de bonne volonté, que elle print une fantasie en elle de ne vouloir jamais obéir à son mary, mais si fault-il quelque chose qu'il y ait qu'elle obeysse en droit et raison. Mais ceste cy estoit fine, despite et orgueilleuse. Son mary du commencement la traicta humainement, luy cuydant changer sa condicion, mais tant plus luy faisoit à son plaisir, et tant plus estoit mauvaïse. Advint ung jour après, qu'il eust mis peine de la chastier par parolles et que il vit qu'il perdoit sa peine, luy fit plusieurs menaces, dont elle fut si fort despitée, qu'elle s'en fuyt en ung jardin, où il y avoit un bel arbre, print une corde et se pendit à une branche. Et quant son mary la vit et fut ad-verty, fut bien marry de la fortune, mais il n'y avoit remède. Si y eut quelqu'uns de ses voisins et amys qui le reconfortèrent au mains mal que peuvent. Si se délibéra qu'il trouveroit moyen d'en recouvrer une autre. Et de fait pour la seconde fois espousa une autre femme, qui fut si plaine de concupiscence charnelle et libidineuse, qu'elle n'esconduysoit homme, touchant le jeu d'aymer, dont le mary se apperceut. Si se advisa qui n'y sçaroit mettre remède, fors l'enfermer en sa chambre, et la garder de troter par les rues et gaster le pavé, par quoy l'enferma par aucune espace de temps en une chambre. Toutefois elle trouva, une nuyt, façon d'eschapper secrètement, entra au jardin et se pendit avec la première femme. Le mary, fort esbahy de cette aventure, ne sceut que penser. Toutefois quant il avoit vue la mauvaistié de sa femme, il le prenoit en patience et se arrestant à ung proverbe qu'on dit, Toutes tierces sont bonnes, se délibéra d'espouser encore une autre femme. Laquelle chose il fit et en trouva une, laquelle luy fut advis, à son semblant, que ce seroit bien son cas. Mais il n'y a si bon et habille qui n'en soit bien trompé. Car si la première fut fière, despite et orgueilleuse, et la seconde plaine de concupiscence charnelle, la troisième fut encore plus pleine de volupté mondaine, car toutes les semaines vouloit avoir vestemens nouveaulx, et estoit impossible au mary savoir entretenir son gros estat sans devenir provre et meschant. Si luy remontra au mieulx qu'il peut, disant, pour la chastier, qu'il avoit acheté de la marchandise, et qu'il falloit vendre partie de ses habits, pour la payer, dont elle fut courroucée très-fort, disant qu'elle estoit bien de lieu venue pour porter tel estat et sans considérer que son mary estoit de moyen estat. Toutefois advint ung jour que pour aucune debte que le mary devoit, les sergens furent à la maison, qui prindrent les meilleures robes qu'elle eust par exécution. Or le lendemain la femme estoit de nopces de l'une de ses parentes. Si print si grant despit en elle disant: Hélas! si je me y treuve ainsy pouvrement acoustrée, tout le monde s'en moquera, et encore plus si je ne m'y trouve, ce me sera une grant honte et reproche. Par quoy sans plus autre chose faire, se délibéra la nuit ensuivante de soy aller pendre au jardin avec les autres, à l'arbre propre qui avoit porté si bon fruit, et de faict y alla et la trouva son mary au lieu propre des autres.

Alors le povere mary voyant ung tel arbre, auquel s'estoint pendues ses trois femmes, fit plusieurs complaints, s'adressa à ung sien fils et à plusieurs de ses voisins, triste, merencolieux, et parla à eux en plourant, disant tels mots: J'ay en mon jardin ung arbre bel et plaisant, mais tant y a que ma première femme s'y est pendue, la seconde aussi, et pareillement la tierce, qui m'est une peine merveillable. Siouldroye bien avoir vostre conseil sur ce cas. Or les voisins, à qui il faisoit ce récit, estoient mariés

à femmes noisives et tensesresses. L'ung d'iceux luy fit response: Tes troys femmes se sont pendues à troys branches de l'arbre; je te pryé, donne moy une greffe de chascune branche, afin que j'en départe entre mes voysins, qui ayent mauvaïses femmes. Si les planterons en nos jardins, où le temps advenir nos femmes se pendront, qui nous sera ung très-grant reconfort et joye singulière. Par quoy me semble que tu as tort de pleurer la perte de celles qui te tourmentoient jour et nuyt. Le mary, à qui ces femmes s'estoient pendues, alla en son jardin, prit de chascune des trois branches ung scion, les bailla à l'ung de ses voysins, qui se délibéra les départir aux autres afin d'avoir des arbres pour pendre leurs femmes qui guères ne valoint.⁶²

La version fournie par Nicolas de Troyes est encore plus longue et plus lourde, mais cet écrivain devait être aussi un pince-sans-rire, puisque certaines variantes ne peuvent être seulement le fruit d'une méprise. Par exemple, tandis que Gringore dit que la première femme était 'plaine de sa voulenté', ce qui est logique et cohérent avec ce qui suit, Nicolas de Troyes écrit qu'elle était 'plaine de bonne voulenté', ce qui est tout à fait cocasse. Tandis que Gringore dit que la troisième femme alla se pendre à l'arbre auquel s'étaient déjà pendue les deux premières, Nicolas de Troyes ajoute, avec sarcasme, qu'elle alla se pendre à l'arbre 'qui avoit porté si bon fruit' et, dans ce cas, il ne peut s'agir d'une méprise.

Un des recueils les plus complets de bons mots a été compilé par Ludovico Domenichi, un polygraphe né à Plaisance en 1515 et mort à Pise en 1564.⁶³ En 1548, il publia, à Florence, ses *Facezie et motti arguti di alcuni eccellentissimi ingegni* [. . .], d'après le *Bel libretto* de Giovanni Mazzuoli, dit lo Stradino (v. 1480–1549),⁶⁴ qui avait transcrit les *Detti piacevoli* attribués à Angelo Poliziano.⁶⁵ Ce recueil radicalement remanié sur le plan linguistique, et complété par des ajouts tirés des *Conviviales sermones* de Iohannes Gast,⁶⁶ a été republié, en

⁶² *Le Grand Parangon de nouvelles nouvelles*, composé par Nicolas de Troyes et publié, d'après le manuscrit original, par Emile Mabilley (Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1869), pp. 181–84.

⁶³ Cf. la notice d'Angela Piscini dans le *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, XL (1991), 595–600.

⁶⁴ *Dizionario enciclopedico della letteratura italiana*, 6 vols (Bari: Laterza; Roma: Unione Editoriale, 1966–70), III (1968), 564.

⁶⁵ Angelo Poliziano, *Detti piacevoli*, éd. par Tiziano Zanato, Bibliotheca Biographica, Sezione artistico-letteraria (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1983), pp. 27–28 et passim. Notre facétie n'est pas présente dans ce recueil.

⁶⁶ *Convivialium sermonum liber, meris jocis ac salibus* [. . .] *refertus. Nonnumquam etiam admixtae sunt* [. . .] *narrationes, eaque omnia* [. . .] *decerpta per Joannem Peregrinum* [. . .] (Basileae: apud B. Westemerum, 1541). Je n'ai pu consulter cet ouvrage de Johann Gast de Brisach, dit Peregrinus

1562, avec le titre de *Detti e fatti di diversi signori e persone private*. Une troisième édition a paru en 1564.⁶⁷ Le voici dans une édition plus tardive.⁶⁸

La moglie di un barbiere essendo mal tratata da lui per disperatione s'impiccò a un fico che era nell'orto. Perche intendendo questo miserabil caso un dipintor suo compagno, corse a trouarlo, e in cambio di condolarsi col barbiere di tale accidente, gli diße: Compare, potrebbesegli hauere, per porlo, un ramo di quel fico, he ha più virtù di far, che le moglie s'impichino, fattemi gratia, ui prego, che io n'habbia una pianta. Empio e inhumano.

Cette version remonte à la tradition cicéronienne puisqu'il est question d'une seule femme qui s'est pendue à un figuier, mais les deux interlocuteurs anonymes sont ici un barbier et un peintre. Dans cette rédaction, la raison qui a poussé la femme à se pendre est clairement déclarée et la conclusion est brève mais percutante.

Notre facétie est amplement glosée dans un traité intitulé *De ridiculis* écrit par un ami d'Erasme,⁶⁹ Vincenzo Maggi,⁷⁰ né probablement à Pompiano près de Brescia vers 1498 et mort peut-être à Ferrare vers 1563–1564. Ce bref traité a été publié, à Venise, en 1550, à la suite d'un commentaire à la *Poétique* d'Aristote que Vincenzo Maggi avait rédigé en collaboration avec Bartolomeo Lombardo († 1540).⁷¹ Dans ce texte, le renvoi à Cicéron est explicite:

⁶⁷ *Dizionario enciclopedico della letteratura italiana*, II (1967), 315–16.

⁶⁸ *Facetie, motti et bvrle Di diuersi Signori, et persone priuate. Raccolte per M. Lodovico Domenichi, et da lui stesso di nuouo del settimo libro ampliate. Con vna nuoua aggiunta di Motti raccolti de M. Tomaso Porcacchi, et con vn discorso intorno ad essi, con ogni diligentia ricorrette, et ristampate. Di nuouo reuista in Roma, et ripurgata da' luoghi infetti* (In Venetia: Appresso Paulo Vgolino, 1599), p. 320, dans le livre VI.

⁶⁹ Paolo Guerrini, 'Due amici bresciani di Erasmo', *Archivio storico lombardo*, 50 (1923), 172–80. Par une lettre d'Emilio de' Migli, datée de Brescia, le 4 mai 1529, on sait que Maggi se rendit à Bâle, chez Erasme, l'auteur d'une lettre de ce dernier qui le présente comme un 'vir profecto minime superstitiosus sed Euangelicae libertatis ac pietatis professor'. Cf. *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, éd. par Percy Stafford Allen et autres, 12 vols (Oxonii: In Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1906–58), VIII, 143. On trouve d'autres mentions de Vincenzo Maggi dans une lettre de Viglius Zuichemus à Erasme, écrite de Padoue, le 2 août 1533 (ibid., X, 287. Zuichemus a transmis à Maggi des lettres d'Erasme) et dans une autre d'Angelus Odonus (Strasbourg, mars? 1535) (ibid., XI, 96).

⁷⁰ Cf. la notice de Danilo Aguzzi-Barbagli dans *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985–87), II (1987), 367–68.

⁷¹ *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, VIII, 142, n. 10.

Illud autem Siculi exemplum uxorem non amantis, a Cicerone sub eo genere positum, quod suspicionem habet ridiculi absconditam, a simulatione desumptum esse, et ad simulatam turpitudinem reduci debere potius mihi uidetur. Nam cum Siculus quereretur uxorem suam de ficu esse suspensam, huius familiaris quidam: 'Amabo te (inquit) da mihi ex ista arbore, quo seram surculos'. Ac ita simulatione increpauit, atque derisit. Nam Siculus lætabatur id uxori suæ contigisse: etsi querendo apud alios se mœstum esse persuadere niteretur. At illius familiaris intelligens illum dissimulare, fingens et ipse suæ uxoris interitum cupere, deludens ipsum: 'Amabo te (inquit) da mihi ex ista arbore, quos seram surculos'. Perinde ac si dixisset, utinam et mihi talis esset ficus, de qua uxor mea suspenderetur. In hoc autem ridiculo turpitudine, qua ridemus, est ficta amici Siculi praua in suam coniugem uoluntas. Admiratio autem est penes modum, quo veram animi Siculi turpitudinem sua simulatione significat, ac exprimit: quod sane nouum, ac admiratione dignum est. Quæ si hoc modo se habent, non plane video, quomodo ridiculum hoc sub caput suspicionis ridiculi reduci debeat. Nam si dicatur absconditam esse suspicionem ridiculi, quoniam non aperte pronunciat uelle se id quoque uxori suæ contigisse, sic pene ridicula, omnia cum in eis turpitudine nomine proprio non exprimitur, sub hoc capite continentur: quod tamen a Cicerone non dicitur.⁷²

Ce long discours vise à présenter notre texte selon les coordonnées exégétiques établies par ce commentateur d'Aristote. A son avis, le rire est déclenché par le mélange de deux ingrédients: la 'turpitudine' (la laideur, physique ou morale, surtout si elle est cachée ['simulata']) et l' 'admiratio' (l'étonnement). Admirons la subtilité de ce philosophe et continuons.

D'un tout autre genre sont *L'ore di ricreazione* de Lodovico Guicciardini (1521–89), neveu de l'historien homonyme et plus fameux Francesco. Ce livre, publié la première fois à Venise, en 1565, chez D. Nicolini et G. de' Cavalli, avec le titre de *Detti e fatti piacevoli e gravi* et ensuite à Anvers, en 1568, chez G. Silvius, avec le titre sous lequel il est connu, a eu une troisième édition, toujours à Anvers, en 1583, avec des ajouts.⁷³ Le passage qui nous intéresse porte un titre significatif: *Alcuni dolersi di cose che altri se ne rallegrerebbero* et le veuf aurait été un citoyen de Pérouse, ce qui est une déformation probable du 'Peratinus' des *Gesta Romanorum*:

⁷² Vincentii Madii Brixiani et Bartholomaei Lombardi Veronensis, *In Aristotelis librum de Poetica communes explanationes: Madii vero in eundem librum propriae annotationes. Eiusdem de Ridiculis: Et in Horatii librum de arte Poetica interpretatio. In fronte preterea operis appositae est Lombardi in Aristotelis Poeticam præfatio* (Venetiis: In officina Erasmiana Vincentii Valgrisi, 1550), pp. 317–18. Le traité *De ridiculis* est imprimé aux pp. 301–27.

⁷³ Lodovico Guicciardini, *L'ore di ricreazione*, éd. par Anne-Marie Van Passen, 'Europa delle corti', Centro studi sulle società di antico regime, Biblioteca del Cinquecento, 49 (Leuven: Leuven University Press; Roma: Bulzoni, 1990), pp. 12–15.

Un perugino si doleva e lagrimava miserabilmente, perciocché la sua moglie s'era impiccata da se stessa a un suo fico. A cui un vicino accostatoseli all'orecchio disse: 'Come è egli possibile, amico, che in tanta prosperità tu trouvi lagrime per piangere? Dammi ti priego un tronco di quel fico, perch'io il voglio piantare nel mio orto, per veder quel che sapesse fare la mia moglie'.⁷⁴

On retrouve notre histoire aussi dans *L'Arcadia in Brenta* (1667) de Ginnesio Gavardo Vacalerio, un des pseudonymes du diplomate et écrivain Giovanni Sagredo (Venise, 1617–82).⁷⁵ Ce livre contient quarante-cinq nouvelles racontées par divers personnages durant les huit derniers jours du carnaval. Celle qui nous intéresse est rapportée par Giacinto, au cours de la première journée. Le détail inédit qui caractérise ce récit consiste dans l'affirmation selon laquelle, lorsque les voisins du veuf entendirent parler de son malheur, ils se pressèrent en foule dans son jardin et, qu'il suffit d'un seul jour, pour que l'arbre, auquel la femme du protagoniste s'était pendue, fût non seulement dépouillé de ses branches, mais aussi complètement déraciné:

Sucsesse, ch'in vn'horto la moglie d'vn galant'huomo s'appese ad vn'arbore: Molti de vicini pregauano il Padrone del fondo, che di gratia gli dasse della semenza per far nascere vn'albore simile ciascheduna (sic) nel suo giardino, particolarmente quelli, che delle loro mogli non erano molto contenti, e fù tale la folla dei supplicanti, che ogn'vno strappando vn branco dalla pianta restò la medesima in vn giorno solo interamente sbarbicata.⁷⁶

Ma recherche, qui ne prétend pas à l'exhaustivité et qui fort vraisemblablement ne l'atteint nullement, s'arrête au début du XVIII^e siècle. D'autres chercheurs trouveront, peut-être, quelque intérêt à enrichir ce dossier.

Le dernier avatar de ce récit, je le tire des *Poésies diverses*⁷⁷ de l'angevin Martin de Baraton. On sait peu de choses de ce personnage énigmatique, né probablement à Baugé, dans le Maine-et-Loire, canton de Saumur, vers 1650 et mort en 1725.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 54, numéro 20.

⁷⁵ *Dizionario enciclopedico della letteratura italiana*, V (1970), 13.

⁷⁶ *L'Arcadia in Brenta, ovvero, la Melanconia sbandita di Ginnesio Gavardo Vacalerio*, All'Illustriss. Sig. Sig. e Patron Colendiss. ii [sic] Sig. Conte Cesare Bianchetti Gambalunga (In Bologna: Per Gio. Recaldini, 1673), p. 35.

⁷⁷ Dont il y a eu une édition en 1704. Je cite celle de 1705.

⁷⁸ *Dictionnaire de biographie française*, sous la direction de Jules Baiteau, Marius Barroux, Marcel Prevost et autres (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1933–), V (1951), cols 203–04. *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, publié sous la direction du cardinal Georges Grente, Albert Pauphilet,

Baraton a écrit deux épigrammes sur notre motif. Je vous les livre sans commentaire. Ces vers se rattachent à la tradition cicéronienne, mais ici l'arbre maudit ou béni, selon les points de vue, est un sycomore, je pense pour les besoins de la rime.

L'HEUREUX MARI

épigramme

Une Greque de grand matin,
Lors que dans sa maison chacun dormoit encore,
Alla se pendre en son jardin,
Aux branches d'un Sycomore.
Quelle fut la raison, c'est ce que l'on ignore.
Quand son époux apprit cet étrange malheur,
Il pensa mourir de douleur:
Soit qu'il aimât sa femme, ou bien que la manière
Dont il la perdoit l'eût touché.
Un agréable débauché
Luy dit: Mon Ami, mon Compere,
D'une femme le Ciel vient de vous délivrer,
N'êtes-vous pas fou d'en pleurer?
Benissez les Dieux dans votre ame.
Ah! que j'aurois l'esprit content,
S'il prenoit envie à ma femme
Un beau matin d'en faire autant!

LA MESME EPIGRAMME

en petits vers.

Une Greque dés l'Aurore,
Par un étrange destin,
S'alla pendre en son jardin

Mgr Louis Pichard, et Robert Barroux, *Le dix-septième siècle* (Paris: Libraire Arthème Fayard, 1954), p. 128. Alexandre Cioranescu, *Bibliographie de la littérature française du dix-septième siècle*, 3 vols (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1965-66), I (1965), 286-87. Pas de nouveautés importantes dans la notice reprise par le Rév. Jean-Pierre Chauveau, à la p. 107 de l'édition entièrement révisée, amendée et mise à jour, sous la direction de Patrick Dandrey, par Emmanuel Bury, Jean-Pierre Chauveau, Dominique Descotes, Philippe Hourcade et Jean Serroy, avec la collaboration de Boris Donné du même *Dictionnaire* (Paris: Fayard, 1996). Aucune étude ne semble lui avoir été consacrée au cours du XX^e siècle, si l'on excepte les quelques lignes que lui a dédiées Frédéric Lachèvre dans sa *Bibliographie des recueils collectifs de poésies publiés de 1597 à 1700*, 4 vols (Paris: Librairie Henri Leclerc, 1901-05), III (1903), 199-200 et IV (1905), 55, ainsi que sa présence dans l'*Anthologie poétique française: XVIII^e siècle: Poèmes choisis*, avec introduction, notices et notes par Maurice Allem (Paris: Garnier, 1919).

Aux branches d'un Sycomore.
 Lors que son Epoux apprit
 Ce malheur épouvantable,
 Il pensa perdre l'esprit,
 Et parut inconsolable.
 Un de ses voisins luy dit.
 Mon cher voisin, mon Compere,
 Faut-il se desesperer
 Pour une pareille affaire?
 Un autre, loin de pleurer,
 De gemir, de soupirer,
 En riroit bien dans son ame.
 Ah! que je serois content,
 Si quelque matin ma femme
 S'avisait d'en faire autant!⁷⁹

Le moins que l'on puisse dire c'est que Baraton n'a pas compris, ou qu'il a fait semblant de ne comprendre qu'à moitié, le sens de cette facétie. En effet, puisque le titre du premier épigramme est *L'heureux mari*, les vers de six à neuf sont en porte à faux par rapport au titre.

Avis donc aux célibataires et aux maris mécontents. La conséquence que Walter Map avait tirée de cette petite histoire écrite pour son ami, 'virum vite philosophice',⁸⁰ mais à qui les livres ne suffisaient plus, reste-t-elle toujours valable?

Mon Ami, et je m'adresse à toi, je crains qu'il te faudra mendier des scions de cet arbre, lorsqu'on ne pourra plus en trouver nulle part.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Poésies diverses, contenant des contes choisis, des Bons Mots, Traits d'Histoire et de Morale, Madrigaux, Epigrammes, et Sonnets*, par M. de Baraton (Paris: Chez Gregoire Dupuys, rue S. Jacques, à la fontaine d'Or, 1705), pp. 62–64.

⁸⁰ Walter Map, *Svaggi di corte*, II, 412.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, II, 428.

‘I AM WELL DONE – PLEASE GO ON EATING’: FOOD, DIGESTION, AND HUMOUR IN LATE MEDIEVAL DANISH WALL PAINTINGS

Axel Bolvig

Beer, Butter, Intestines, and Grilled Human Flesh

Jesus never laughed or smiled. Holy people behave like Him: they tend to be solemn, austere, and their body language is restricted. They ought in any case to behave like Jesus. But in late medieval Danish wall paintings some holy people rebel, and St Laurence even jokes. He seems to take part in a widespread change in attitudes in the visual language of northern Europe during the fifteenth century. What is more, in Danish wall paintings he is one of the most commonly depicted holy people. In a comprehensive index of the iconographic motifs of Danish wall paintings, the image of St Laurence appears more than one hundred times.¹

Representative depictions of St Laurence usually show him standing with a grill in his hand.² The grill refers, of course, to his martyrdom. In some churches he is depicted lying on the grill surrounded by his tormentors who kindle the fire under the saint. The fire blazes up and the tormentors use great pitchforks to turn St Laurence over.³ In two cases a scroll adds a linguistic commentary. One of the scrolls bears the inscription: ‘Matthäi Cap. 5 v 44’. This inscription refers

¹ Axel Bolvig, *Danmarks kalkmalerier* (Copenhagen: Politikens, 2002), p. 317.

² <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: laurentius.

³ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: 20/74 (Tyvelse church); AB/19-15.jpg (Vallensbæk church); JB/255 (Skamstrup church); lund-019-088.jpg (Brunnby church); Sigerslevvester-24.jpg (Sigerslevvester church).

to a passage from the Gospel according to Matthew which reads: 'ego autem dico vobis diligite inimicos vestros benefacite his qui oderunt vos et orate pro persequentibus et calumniantibus vos' ('But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you').⁴ So, the contents on the scroll are an external commentary, expressed not by St Laurence but by Jesus according to the evangelist Matthew. The other scroll reads: 'in manus tuas domine commendo spiritum meum' ('Into your hands, my Lord, I commend my spirit'), indicating words spoken by the saint and addressed to God.⁵ So far, the images I have discussed are in no way surprising.

However, in one parish church, Tuse, above the saint on the grill, there are two scrolls with inscriptions indicating the saint's remarks as he was being tortured: 'gratias tibi ago domine jesu christe quod portas celi ingredi merui' ('I thank you my lord Jesus Christ because I have deserved to enter the gate to heaven'); and 'assatus sum commedite' ('I am well done, go on eating') (Fig. 1). These two scrolls refer to *The Golden Legend*.⁶ The first is directed towards God and the second refers to the saint's ironic commentary to the tormentors. The saint's invitation to eat him may be considered to offer an example of black humour.⁷ The function of the inscription is a brilliant example of what Roland Barthes calls *relais*. According to Barthes, the interpretation of images can be uncomfortable, what he calls 'la terreur du signe incertain'. Images can be interpreted in a number of ways and an accompanying text can be used to guide the viewer/reader into understanding an image in the way intended by the artist/author. To avoid multiple interpretations of an image, the linguistic message of

⁴ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: 9/54 (Mørkøv church). Quotations from the Vulgate are from the Bible Gateway: <<http://bible.gospelcom.net/>>. English translations are taken from *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version; Containing the Old and New Testaments Revised* (London: Nelson, 1952).

⁵ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: Over Dråby-15.jpg (Over Dråby church). These words echo Psalm 31. 5: 'peccatum meum notum facio tibi et iniquitatem meam non abscondo dixi confitebor scelus meum Domino et tu dimisisti iniquitatem peccati mei semper' ('Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God'); and Luke 23. 46: 'et clamans voce magna Iesus ait Pater in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum et haec dicens expiravit' ('Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.')

⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), II, 67.

⁷ Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L'Humour en chaire: le rire dans l'église médiévale*, Histoire et Société, 28 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994), p. 22.



Plate 1. St Laurence. 1460–80. Tuse Church (Vestsjælland, Denmark).

the text can take on the function of *ancrage*, that is, fixing the meaning of the image. But language is not limited to the role of 'semantic extradition'; its second function — that of *relais* — brings to the viewer/reader complementary and supplementary information, for example the identity of a place or a person. An inscription can therefore comment upon, describe, clarify, or complete an image.⁸

The image itself, with its absurd violence, is grotesque but in accordance with the conventional narrative depiction of saints being tortured. It is in fact an expression of violence in medieval society with its combination of drama, action,

⁸ Roland Barthes, 'Rhétorique de l'image', *Communications*, 4 (1964), 44–45.

suffering, and entertainment. The motifs of eating, digesting, and food are embedded in the written remark as well as in the image. The irony and humour of the image are expressed in linguistic terms. In a small Danish parish church, centuries before George Berkeley and David Hume, the painter, a certain Isefjordsmesteren, gave his version of the phrase 'esse est percipi': the proof of the saint is in the eating. The same notion is found in Psalm 34. 8: 'Gustate et videte quoniam bonus Dominus beatus vir qui sperat in eo' ('Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him'); and in I Peter 2. 3: 'si gustastis quoniam dulcis Dominus' ('You have tasted that the Lord is good').

The important question which interests us here is whether we can find corresponding humour expressed in the non-discursive visual language. A scroll with its linear statement is a foreign matter: its remark in time exists within an image functioning in space. The different configurations of a non-discursive image interrelate in a way which makes it difficult to transfer Barthes's twin linguistic functions *ancrage* and *relais* to a purely visual function. The image of St Laurence on the grill does not really imply that he considers himself fit for human consumption or that he invites his tormentors to a cannibalistic meal. It is up to the viewer to give the text and image such an interpretation.

Two seminal books on humour, both dating from the end of the twentieth century, challenge the widespread and commonly held view of a solemn and austere late Middle Ages. Both of these works, *L'Humour en chaire* and *Rire au Moyen Âge*, convincingly demonstrate how people — both lay and secular — laughed and joked in the centuries preceding the Renaissance.⁹ Jeannine Horowitz, Sophia Menache, and Jean Verdon examine rich written material, of which there is very little left in Denmark, but only peripherally refer to visual material, of which we possess a considerable amount, especially in our wall paintings. Visual material certainly has something to say on the subject.

The imagery of late medieval Danish wall paintings represents a shift in mentality compared to the Romanesque aristocratic period. To a large extent the wall paintings of the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries constitute the language of the local peasantry in an illiterate society.¹⁰ The religious images refer not just to Scripture but also to a verbal retelling formulated by the ordinary

⁹ Horowitz and Menache, *L'Humour en chaire*; Jean Verdon, *Rire au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Perrin, 2001).

¹⁰ Axel Bolvig, 'Images of Late Medieval "Daily Life": A History of Mentalities', *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*, 39 (1998), 94–III.

man.¹¹ The many other painted subjects that could be labelled 'grotesques' without doubt refer to vernacular speech despite the fact that the wall paintings contain many Latin inscriptions.¹² We must try to find jokes, ironic commentaries, and surprising remarks expressed visually rather than linguistically. This is my guide in interpreting wall paintings.

The depiction of St Laurence on the grill should not be regarded as an isolated motif. In their inscriptions Danish painters always describe their decoration of a church in the singular, as one picture, despite our modern habit of subdividing their work into several iconographic subjects.¹³ Consequently, 'St Laurence on the grill' should be considered alongside various other iconographical subjects within *the* picture that is the total decoration of Tuse church.

Next to St Laurence, in the same cell, the martyrdom of St Erasmus is depicted (Fig. 2).¹⁴ Erasmus is lying on a bed, just as St Laurence lies on the grill. Two tormentors are winding the intestines out of his stomach. The image obviously depicts torture and also suggests notions connected to the stomach: eating, digestion, and food. As I mention above, St Laurence is one of the most commonly depicted saints in the more than one hundred such images. However, we only find the image of St Erasmus in seven churches.¹⁵ Why is a very popular saint depicted alongside a lesser one? What connects these two saints? My answer is: eating, digestion, and food. Stretched on the bed, St Erasmus is smiling. If he had had free access to speech I guess his remark in a scroll would read: *you have got yards of my intestines, go on stuffing them*.

These two images are situated beneath an image of St George fighting the dragon. The combat takes place in front of a princess and her parents (Fig. 3).¹⁶ The story tells that the dragon demands two sheep to eat every day. When there are no sheep left, the king must offer his daughter, the princess who, in the picture, is waiting to be devoured by the dragon. The image shows how the passing hero saves the princess by slaying the monster; it has, in effect, had its last meal.

¹¹ Axel Bolvig, *Den ny billedbibel* (København: Politikens, 2003), pp. 16–63.

¹² See <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: droleri.

¹³ Axel Bolvig, '*Hæc pictura completa fuit per manus*: Om kalkmalerier og rammer', forthcoming.

¹⁴ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: 30-3/77, Tuse-36.jpg, 739-009.jpg (Tuse church).

¹⁵ Bolvig, *Danmarks kalkmalerier*, p. 303.

¹⁶ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: 30-3/76, Tuse-35.jpg, 739-007.jpg, 739-030.jpg (Tuse church).



Plate 2. St Erasmus. 1460–80. Tuse Church.

In the neighbouring cell on the same lower level we find two images illustrating stories which are quite different from the depictions of St Erasmus and St Laurence. This said, they are closely related to the latter subjects on the connotative level. To the left of the cell we can see an unmarried woman broaching a cask of beer or wine. A devil is helping her hold the barrel so that she can fill a huge jug. Behind the woman another devil is pushing a tap between her legs in order to draw off her fluids into a jug (Fig. 4).¹⁷ The sexual overtone is direct and clear, but the main idea underpinning the image is related to food — wine or beer — and to bodily fluids that could be the result of digestion. The two kinds of fluid are poured into jugs, suggesting that they are intended for consumption. The woman's body is compared to a barrel and her gesture is clearly a sexual one. A linguistic *relais* could read: *Her fluids are well brewed so you can begin drawing them off*; or: *Tap the woman and get a cordial*.

¹⁷ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: 30-3/74, Tuse-31.jpg, Tuse-62.jpg, 738-033.jpg, 738-035.jpg (Tuse church).



Plate 3. St George. 1460–80. Tuse Church.

To the right of this scene a married woman is seen churning butter: she clearly draws the stick up and down into the churn. A devil is helping her in this scene imbued with sexual overtones, one which finds a parallel in an old Danish proverb: *fanden og hans punpestok* ('the devil and his pump rod'). A devil behind the woman has lifted up her skirt to expose her bare buttocks and to have sexual intercourse with her (Fig. 5).¹⁸ The devils' sexual misuse of the woman is closely related to her making food for consumption. Her body is compared to a churn and her bodily gesture seems to invite sexual intercourse. A scroll *might* read: *The fluid has turned solid but go on using it.*

¹⁸ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: 739-029.jpg (Tuse church).



Plate 4. Tapping of Wine or Beer. 1460–80. Tuse Church.

My modest attempt to transfer the visual messages we find in Danish wall paintings into linguistic *relais* demonstrates both the power of images and their lack of linear precision. The last two images discussed above are situated beneath a depiction of damned souls being dragged into the mouth of Leviathan to be swallowed — and consumed? (Fig. 6).¹⁹ Just as the dragon insists on devouring sheep, and finally a princess, so does Satan require the nourishment of damned souls. Each individual image in the two neighbouring cells deals in some way with body, food, and consumption and, since women are involved, with sex. In my male understanding the images are embedded in a Laurentian sense of humour.

¹⁹ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: Tuse-29.jpg, Tuse-52.jpg, 738-033.jpg, 738-034.jpg, 739-033.jpg (Tuse church).



Plate 5. Churning of Butter. 1460–80. Tuse Church.



Plate 6. Mouth of Leviathan. 1460–80. Tuse Church.

Early Breakfast

In the parish church of Äspö there is an action-packed depiction of Adam ploughing which dates from around 1500. He can be seen whipping two horses, one of which is rearing up. An inscription in Old Danish reads: 'huist hoo fra(m) saa bad Ada(m) val op til otteværth' ('Gee up! gee up! So Adam welcomed the horses to breakfast') (Fig. 7).²⁰ After the Expulsion God said to Adam:

¹⁷ ad Adam vero dixit quia audisti vocem uxoris tuae et comedisti de ligno ex quo praeceperam tibi ne comederes maledicta terra in opere tuo in laboribus comedes eam cunctis diebus vitae tuae

¹⁸ spinas et tribulos germinabit tibi et comedes herbas terrae

¹⁹ in sudore vultus tui vesceris pane donec revertaris in terram de qua sumptus es quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris (Genesis 3. 17–19)

(Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it', cursed is the ground because of you; in

²⁰ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: LOA-30DSCN3751.jpg (Äspö church).



Plate 7. Adam Ploughing. c. 1500. Äspö Church (Skåne, Sweden).

pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.)

In the late Middle Ages Adam and Eve have rebelled against God's threats. They behave in fact rather like well-to-do tenant farmers. In this image, both are well dressed and they form a tight nuclear family. Eve is not subordinated to Adam who, in turn, does not work himself to death (Fig. 8).²¹

It is extremely tempting to consider these two linguistic statements within the self-understanding of late medieval peasantry. Long ago God said: *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread* and, around 1500, Adam answered: *Let's have some breakfast*. Ploughing the land, as seen at Äspö, has always had implications

²¹ Bolvig, 'Images of Late Medieval "Daily Life"', pp. 107–09; Bolvig, 'Contrasts in Time and Space: The Use of the Image-Database "Danish Wall Paintings"', in *Kontraste im Alltag des Mittelalters*, ed. by Gerhard Jaritz (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), pp. 234–35.



Plate 8. Eve Spinning, c. 1500. Äspö Church.

associated with ritual, with the earth, and therefore with human fertility. From 3000-year-old petroglyphs to the picture found on the old five hundred kroner Danish banknote, scenes of ploughing have long been ascribed with special significance.

Images are loaded with information. However, in contrast to texts, all of this information is gathered in the same, single syntax. The narrative is created by the viewer's imagination, not by the image itself. And the viewer almost always uses

the present continuous tense in his or her narrative: the peasant *is* ploughing.²² It therefore follows that the local parishioners might easily identify with Adam — according to their notion of a happy and perhaps defiant life — but not with God's Adam. Even if an inscription is missing in depictions of the motif of the first Labour, we might expect that the viewers of that time, in their linguistic narratives, would inevitably use the *relais* function to refer to their own situation, or rather to their notion of a better life on earth.²³

Transubstantiation and Vice Versa

In the parish church of Smørum there is a not-too-well-preserved painting from about 1500 representing the Last Supper. This painting is located just above the high altar. Jesus is seated at a table together with his apostles. This is, of course, their last meal, the one at which the Eucharist was instituted. The image contains a central religious subject: transubstantiation. By using a few words Jesus Christ is able to transform bread and wine into his own body and blood. This is arguably a transformation that nobody really understood. Indeed, shortly after the Reformation in 1536, his words *hoc est corpus meus* were used in a transformed version, *hokus pokus* (hocus-pocus), by ordinary men and (especially) by conjurers in Denmark. The change from food and drink to flesh and blood was impossible to explain, but it seems to me that in Smørum the notion received a visual commentary which framed the Last Supper. To the right of the table a man is throwing another man over the heads of the seated apostles. On his way down, to the left, a married woman is whipping him (or another man) so hard that he defecates on a man who is himself urinating in a bucket (Figs 9 and 9a).²⁴ How can these bodily evacuations happen just as Jesus is instituting the Eucharist?

²² Bolvig, 'Images of Late Medieval "Daily Life"', pp. 95–96.

²³ See e.g. <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: 20/149 (Hyllested church); 28-1/76 (Benestad); sh/22, Elmelunde-24.jpg, Elmelunde-25.jpg, Elmelunde-53.jpg, Elmelunde-100.jpg, Elmelunde-103.jpg (Elmelunde); lund-040-005.jpg (Fjälkinge); Fulltofte-36.jpg (Fulltofta).

²⁴ <www.kalkmalerier.dk/> search: smørum in kirke and nadver (Smørum church). Cf. Katrin Kröll, 'Die Komik des grotesken Körpers in der christlichen Bildkunst des Mittelalters', in *Mein ganzer Körper ist Gesicht: Grotteske Darstellungen in der europäischen Kunst und Literatur des Mittelalters* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1994), pp. 38–39; and Steen Schjødt Christensen, 'Mysterious Images – Grimacing, Grotesques, Obscene, Popular: Anti- or Commentary Images?', *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*, 39 (1998), 72–75.



Plate 9. Last Supper and Entertainment. c. 1500. Smørum Church (Copenhagen, Denmark).

A grotesque *relais* might read: *What is miraculously transformed by the body, the body gives back in a transformed way.* Is it really possible that this image, located over the high altar, in a visual way — that is, in space — demonstrates an evolutionary transformation from bread and wine to flesh and blood and further to faeces and urine — that is, in time? A very badly preserved painting in the church at Løjt might well underline the validity of this question. The painting represents a man urinating into a chalice.²⁵ There are several other images of men urinating and defecating in Danish wall paintings, but none is so closely related to a depiction of the institution of the Eucharist.²⁶ If objections were raised regarding such ‘profane’ entertainment at the Holy Supper, the artist could gesticulate and say that the acrobats are performing their obscene play in another

²⁵ Jens Bruun, *Løjt kirke i ni århundreder* (Aabenraa: Løjt lokalhistoriske Forening, 1997), p. 26.

²⁶ Axel Bolvig, *Kalkmalerier omkring Øresund* (Copenhagen: Sesam, 2000), p. 146.



Plate 9a. Last Supper and Entertainment. c. 1500. Smørum Church.

room. This comment can be made in the light of a better-known example: in 1573 Paolo Veronese was summoned to appear before the Holy Office because of his painting 'The Last Supper'. The painting contained all kinds of human and animal figures, all of which the Holy Office considered incompatible with the gravity of the subject. Veronese answered that he did it with the idea that these people were outside the room where the supper was taking place.²⁷

Conclusion

At the top of the same vaulting at Smørum church another figure broadens the references to, or suggestions of, bodily transformation. A grotesque, naked man with a huge mouth is depicted with a large drinking cup in his right hand while, with his left hand, he is gorging himself with something resembling a ham. A closer look at the image reveals that the 'ham' is in fact his own stomach: he is literally eating himself! (Fig. 10). This is a sort of egocentric cannibalistic recycling. The image certainly makes me wonder where he has got the drink from. It would seem problematic to suggest that the image of a man who is eating is meant as an ironic commentary on what Jesus is consuming at the table of the Last Supper after having pronounced that the bread is in actual fact his flesh. As far as late medieval Danish wall-painted imagery is concerned, it is tempting to consider the strange scenery accompanying a most holy and inexplicable scene as a bit of fun. The non-discursive image could easily have been clarified by a discursive *relais*. Imitating St Laurence, our man might say: *This is my body* — which, de facto, it is — *I am well done, I will go on eating it*: *Esse est percipi*.

²⁷ See my introduction to *History and Images: Towards a New Iconology*, ed. by Axel Bolvig and Philip Lindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), p. xxix.



Plate 10. Man Eating Himself. *c.* 1500. Smørum Church.

RIRE DE SOI, FAIRE RIRE DE SOI ET FAIRE RIRE DES AUTRES DANS LES JEUX ALLEMANDS DE CARNAVAL AU XV^e SIÈCLE

Jean-Marc Pastré

Les formes les plus prisées de la liesse carnavalesque, les danses et les défilés sur la voie publique, connurent en Allemagne bien des débordements si bien que les défilés furent à Nuremberg réglementés et les déguisements sur la voie publique interdits et sévèrement punis tout au long du XV^e siècle. Ainsi naquirent les jeux allemands de Mardi-Gras ou Jeux de Carnaval, les *Fastnachtspiele*. Seules quelques villes, Lübeck, Sterzing et surtout Nuremberg virent apparaître au début du XV^e siècle cette forme théâtrale de distraction dont les premières formes sont à peine attestées et dont les auteurs sont généralement inconnus. Comme les monologues et les dialogues dramatiques de la France d'alors, ces Jeux sont faits de saynètes ou de séquences de scènes allant de 40 à 800 vers et qui mettent en scène pour quelques minutes, pour un quart d'heure et même parfois pour une demi-heure d'un à six personnages plus ou moins bouffons chargés de contribuer à la liesse d'un public relégué dans les auberges de la ville.¹ Interdits d'association, soumis étroitement au patriciat commerçant, les artisans constituèrent essentiellement le public de ces Jeux, et les plus déshérités d'entre eux, les compagnons, en furent pour l'essentiel les acteurs.

Les plus anciens de ces Jeux semblent avoir été les Jeux de revue, dans lesquels les personnages se succèdent devant le public pour raconter leur affaire, généralement leur aventure ou leur mésaventure amoureuse. Les scènes dialoguées, plus élaborées, tournent autour d'une action dramatique, généralement un procès

¹ Eckehard Catholy, *Das Fastnachtspiel des Spätmittelalters: Gestalt und Funktion* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1961). Catholy, *Fastnachtspiel* (Stuttgart: Metzler 56, 1966).

devant un tribunal ou la préparation d'un mariage. Étudiés sous l'angle des relations entre soi-même et l'autre, les Jeux se partagent en trois catégories: les Jeux où le personnage rit de soi, les Jeux où il fait rire de soi et les Jeux où il fait rire d'un autre. Destinés à faire rire, ces Jeux relèvent de la raillerie sans méchanceté plus que de la moquerie ou de la dérision, plus acide et volontiers blessante. Mieux vaut donc pour ces Jeux éviter les termes de dérision ou d'auto-dérision. Pour le contenu même des Jeux, les mêmes thèmes se distribuent indifféremment dans ces trois modalités relationnelles du rire. La fiction des Jeux de Nuremberg veut que les personnages soient des paysans, vus par les citadins comme des êtres frustes et proches de l'animalité. Localisées à la ferme ou aux champs, ces scènes visent à faire sauter les interdits citadins et les barrières culturelles du non-dit. Le rire tient à deux manières de procéder. Pour la première, les personnages disent ce qui ne se fait pas ou ne se dit pas, et le rire est suscité par la surprise, par le choc de la chose soudain dite sans fard. Ces scènes relèvent alors d'un naturalisme foncier. Dans la seconde manière, les personnages laissent deviner les mêmes réalités, mais masquées par un habillage narratif plus anodin. Les scènes relèvent alors d'un double sens savamment élaboré ou de l'antiphrase. Le rire se fonde donc alternativement sur deux extrêmes antithétiques, la nudité de la chose dite ou sa dissimulation, cette deuxième manière permettant d'en dire publiquement beaucoup plus que le voudraient les convenances, la bienséance. Proche de l'animal, le masque du paysan permet l'expression des forces vitales de l'homme, le sexe et la scatologie, le sexe laissant planer parfois le risque de l'homosexualité et même — animalité oblige — de la coprophagie et de la zoophilie.

Rire de soi, faire rire de soi et faire rire des autres: ces trois modalités relationnelles du rire s'articulent en fait en un double système d'opposition. Lorsqu'on rit de soi et lorsqu'on fait rire de soi, l'objet du rire est le même, alors qu'il est, tout au contraire, l'Autre dans le troisième cas de figure. Une corrélation de l'objet du rire oppose ainsi deux termes associés (soi-même comme objet du rire) à un troisième (l'autre). A cette corrélation s'ajoute celle du regard de celui qui rit. Faire rire des autres et rire de soi associent en effet le même regard sur soi-même, seule diffère son orientation: le regard vers l'autre dans le premier cas, le regard vers soi-même dans le second. Lorsque le personnage au contraire fait rire de lui, il s'agit du regard des autres sur lui: l'origine du regard n'est plus la même, la cible du rire est inversée; il s'agit de faire rire soi-même des autres, et de faire rire les autres de soi-même. Soi-même et l'autre appartiennent ainsi à deux faisceaux de corrélation. La corrélation du regard oppose ainsi, mais différemment, les deux termes de la corrélation précédente, soi-même et l'autre. Rire de soi est,

de fait, au coeur des Jeux de Carnaval avec 20 cas étudiés sur 35, soit 60%; rire de soi et faire rire de soi rassemblent même les trois quarts de ces Jeux. Cet aperçu quantitatif montre assez que le sot de Carnaval, qui se contemple avec indulgence, voire même avec complaisance, insuffle aux Jeux une aménité qui exclut la dérision et la moquerie. Cette prédominance du soi conditionne en outre l'appartenance des trois modalités relationnelles du rire à l'une ou l'autre des deux formes des Jeux. Le rire sur soi-même appelle le soliloque ou le monologue, éventuellement artificiellement dialogué; de fait, les 20 Jeux qui en relèvent sont tous des Jeux de revue, tandis que la dizaine de Jeux où le personnage fait rire de l'autre relève des Jeux pourvus d'une action dramatique, scènes de tribunal ou d'organisation d'un mariage. Faire rire de soi impliquant le regard de l'autre, les six Jeux qui relèvent de cette modalité du rire contiennent pour les deux tiers une action théâtrale à situation de dialogue. Dans la dizaine de pièces où l'on fait rire de l'autre, l'autre est presque toujours présent; il peut donc se défendre et faire rire à son tour de celui qui le vise: ces Jeux ne prennent pas l'homme en traître, et c'est la raison pour laquelle les deux tiers ont la forme d'une scène de tribunal; il y a certes un accusateur, mais l'accusé a droit à la parole et peut plaider sa cause. Le but étant de faire rire, chacun se garde en fait des sarcasmes, l'intérêt de chacun étant de ne pas blesser l'autre pour ne pas avoir à recevoir de mauvais coups en retour. Auteurs ou objets du rire, les personnages sont tous complices, ce qui contribue d'autant à la convivialité propre à des Jeux, qui sont faits pour souder une communauté dans un rire collectif qui lui sert à la fois de lien et de marque d'appartenance.

Pour rire de lui-même, un personnage doit avoir du recul par rapport à lui-même. Cette distanciation et ce regard posé sur soi-même implique un jugement sur soi. Les Jeux qui relèvent de cette modalité du rire mettent ainsi en scène des personnages qui tantôt désapprouvent leur comportement, dont ils savent rire néanmoins, tantôt l'approuvent avec complaisance et amusement. La plupart de ces Jeux mettent en scène les déconvenues et mésaventures amoureuses des sots de Carnaval. Leur sottise recouvre à peu près tous les cas possibles de déconvenue. Un benêt reconnaît ainsi avoir reçu un nombre de coups de bâton pour s'être présenté chez des belles qu'il se croyait gagnées pour l'unique raison qu'elles lui avaient gentiment adressé un salut.² Un autre, tout au contraire, n'a

² Adalbert von Keller, *Fastnachtspiele aus dem 15. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins, 1853–58; repr., Darmstadt, 1965–66), n° 32, Ein spil von narren, p. 260.

pas compris les avances de la belle et la quitte sans rien faire.³ Un autre timide s'imagine vainqueur dès qu'une belle le regarde, mais n'ose rien entreprendre quand il la rencontre si elle ne se jette pas sur lui.⁴ Plusieurs de ces déconvenues relèvent du motif, si cher aux fabliaux, de la substitution de la femme par une autre ou par un animal. La vieille mère de la belle prend au lit la place de sa fille, mais l'amoureux découvre le stratagème en touchant la peau de la vieille, rugueuse comme l'écorce d'un bouleau.⁵ Un autre fol croît reconnaître sa bien-aimée à la fenêtre, alors qu'il s'agit de son chat. Croyant recevoir de lui, donc d'elle, des marques de tendresse, il lui rend baiser pour baiser, alors qu'il s'agit des baisers qu'adresse à la belle au lit un autre galant,⁶ scène dont le probable double sens sans doute n'échappait pas au public. Ailleurs, on substitue une chèvre à la belle, animal que le galant reconnaît à sa barbe, mais qui le lèche si bien qu'il la prend pour fiancée et la fait bêler;⁷ cette scène de possible zoophilie passait sans doute plus pour une plaisanterie assimilant la belle à la chèvre. Il est rare que le sot refuse l'amour à la belle travaillée par une fringale nocturne au-dessus des genoux, *der nachthunger ob den knieen*; elle lui en veut alors et crie qu'on devrait frapper de coups ce genre d'ânes paresseux,⁸ scène qui fait rire par le double sens qu'elle recèle. D'autres Jeux traitent du motif de l'insatisfaction de la femme, si présent dans la littérature médiévale. L'un des sots a épousé une jeune femme insatiable;⁹ l'autre offre à une belle, tout aussi fort assaillie par la fringale nocturne, pour fourrage demandé une saucisse barbue qui ne satisfait pas la dame.¹⁰ D'autres enfin donnent pour cause de la déconvenue la divulgation des amours par un tiers, variante comique des surveillants et jaloux de la lyrique courtoise. Le comique y tient une fois encore au double sens. Dans le premier de ces Jeux, le sot se promène avec une belle dans un jardin plein de pommes et de poires; il la lutine; elle lui donne sa couronne de roses blanches. Mais un

³ Ibid., pp. 261–62.

⁴ Ibid., p. 259. Ibid., n° 44, *Vasnachtspil*, p. 338, et n° 38, *Ain vasnachtspil von denen, die sich die weiber nerren lassen*, pp. 283–84.

⁵ Ibid., n° 13, *Aliud von der puolschaft*, p. 117.

⁶ Ibid., n° 38, p. 285.

⁷ Ibid., n° 13, p. 119.

⁸ Ibid., n° 99, *Di harnaschvasnacht*, p. 755.

⁹ Ibid., n° 45, *Gar ain hupsches vastnachtspil von sibenzechen pauren, wie sich ieclicher lobt*, p. 346.

¹⁰ Ibid., n° 116, *Die narren*, p. 1010.

médisant les dénonce et accuse la belle d'avoir perdu sa vertu.¹¹ Dans le second, il s'agit d'une promenade en traîneau.¹² Dans le troisième, le galant chevalier prend derrière lui la belle sur sa monture; il la saisit sous la ceinture et la serre contre lui, ce qui lui vaut d'être accusé d'avoir déshonoré la fille.¹³

La découverte, liée à la substitution présumée de la belle, masque, nous l'avons vu, la réussite amoureuse dissimulée par le double sens. Nombre de Jeux relèvent de ce renversement de situation; le personnage déplore sa mésaventure, mais celle-ci se révèle être une réussite dès que l'auditoire, dans la connivence du décodage, découvre au second degré que l'apparente déconvenue cache en fait le succès de l'entreprise. L'habillage narratif relève le plus souvent d'une localisation toute symbolique, d'une rusticité très avancée, par laquelle les trous fangeux et nauséabonds qu'on mentionne ne sont pas le lieu de la rencontre amoureuse, mais le corps de la femme et l'acte même des amours.¹⁴ La belle conduit ainsi le galant dans une fosse où il doit trois années durant creuser chaque nuit sans culottes, opération dont on comprend vite le sens véritable et qui donne au fol par ce long exercice un battant de cloche aux dimensions impressionnantes.¹⁵ La mésaventure tient la plupart du temps aux épanchements peu maîtrisés qui trempent le galant en pleine action. Un paysan est ainsi invité à faire entrer son âne et à laisser pendre devant la porte les deux boules attachées à son tuyau d'arrosage. La belle avait annoncé qu'elle laisserait ouverte la porte de derrière, mais, lorsque le galant voulut entrer, la belle l'inonda de lessive de chambre.¹⁶ De grandes eaux viennent donc mouiller le galant, tantôt dans la fosse à herbes où il attend la belle, laquelle fait par jeu inonder la fosse,¹⁷ tantôt dans la cuisine où l'on prépare la viande près de l'arrière-train: le sot voulait y fourrer son jeannot, mais la belle lui a fait prendre un bain de lessive.¹⁸ Dans ce même Jeu, l'amant s'endort, ce dont la belle profite — habillage narratif tout à fait invraisemblable

¹¹ Ibid., n° 99, p. 758.

¹² Ibid., p. 257.

¹³ Ibid., p. 758.

¹⁴ Voir notre article, 'Typologie et topologie de la séduction dans les *Fastnachtspiele* du XV^e siècle', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 19 (1992), 165–76.

¹⁵ Von Keller, *Fastnachtspiele aus dem 15. Jahrhundert*, n° 17, Ein spil von fürsten und herren, pp. 142–43.

¹⁶ Ibid., n° 13, p. 115.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁸ Ibid., n° 38, p. 260.

dont la seule utilité est de permettre le double sens — pour courir chez le brasseur prendre un grand seau qu'elle vide sous le galant.¹⁹ Ailleurs, le galant doit puiser toute la nuit à la fontaine pour que son compagnon ait son plaisir dans le lit.²⁰ Dans un autre Jeu, le galant attend la belle jusqu'à six heures du matin; elle place soudain son arrière-train à la fenêtre, qu'il baise, pensant avoir affaire à la tête; un cuvier d'eau de lessive lui fera ensuite passer l'odeur d'un gaz qu'il reçut dans les yeux.²¹ Bon nombre de ces Jeux font surprendre le fol par un rival ou même par plusieurs, les coups que le benêt y reçoit laissant entendre après les amours le risque ou la réalité d'une issue homosexuelle. Le Jeu 99, plus explicite que les autres, justifie le décodage, moins aisé pour le lecteur d'aujourd'hui dans les autres Jeux. La belle y invite le fol à s'ébattre dans sa pièce la plus intime, mais le mari survient: le sot s'enfuit pour éviter les coups de sa baguette à deux anses.²² Ailleurs, le galant se coule tout nu dans le lit de la belle, mais tombe dans l'étable, où un homme l'attend et le roue de coups.²³ Par prédilection, les auteurs ajoutent à ces épanchements le motif de la scatologie: la belle fait attendre le fol, car elle n'est pas encore prête; par fâcheuse inadvertance, le paysan tombe dans un profond merdier pour se réfugier ensuite, tout englué, dans le trou à poules.²⁴ Ailleurs, quatre hommes font passer le galant couvert d'excréments jusqu'aux oreilles dans un ruisseau, puis dans un caniveau où il se lave.²⁵ Il en va de même pour le galant qui, invité par la belle à entrer, se retrouve sur le dos de la truie, laquelle le fait passer dans une boue profonde dont il retire avec son balai les excréments.²⁶

Le rieur est donc ici satisfait de ses oeuvres. Ces Jeux rejoignent ainsi le groupe des Jeux dans lesquels le fou de Carnaval se vante de ses qualités, en fait de ses capacités sexuelles dans la plupart des cas. Un personnage se réjouit ainsi

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

²⁰ Ibid., n° 42, Hie hebt sich an ain verclagung vor dem officiall genant das korgericht, p. 286.

²¹ Ibid., n° 43, Gar ain vast spotisch paurnspil gar kurzweilig zu lesen. Sagt ietlicher was im auf der puolschaft gegent ist, p. 331.

²² Ibid., n° 99, pp. 755–56.

²³ Ibid., n° 43, p. 332; n° 44, Dans une cave profonde, p. 338.

²⁴ Ibid., n° 13, p. 119.

²⁵ Ibid., n° 43, p. 330.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 332, et n° 45, p. 348. L'amour avec une femme rustique est assimilé à l'amour avec la truie, les mœurs amoureuses de la ville s'opposant à celles de la campagne; cf. n° 45, pp. 348–49.

des cadeaux que lui rapporte auprès des dames son jeune fol.²⁷ Un autre vante ses qualités de tireur de son bâton de chair accompagné de deux boules; un autre encore sert les femmes à genoux et tire dans la filasse rêche; dans ce même Jeu, l'un préférerait suspendre ses deux oeufs devant leur demeure plutôt que de dire du mal des femmes; l'autre frotte si doucement de son archet la viole des dames qu'elles ne cherchent pas ailleurs; un autre encore joue si bien sur leur luth qu'elles en ont les genoux qui vacillent.²⁸ Dans un autre Jeu, les fols savent si bien se battre à fleuret moucheté entre nombril et genoux que les femmes croient qu'il leur tombe du miel. Dans ce même Jeu, les femmes laissent le fol toucher leur moulin à poivre et font en sorte qu'il leur tombe entre les genoux.²⁹ Le même stratagème réunit le galant et la fille de ferme à l'étable, alors que cette dernière trait la vache, laquelle renverse le pot de lait et précipite les amants dans la bouse, où ils goûtent enfin l'amour.³⁰ Dans d'autres Jeux enfin, les fols rient de leurs défauts ou de leurs plaisirs vitaux. Douze valets vantent ainsi leur paresse,³¹ d'autres leur plaisir de manger, de boire ou de vider leur ventre,³² d'autres encore récitent à l'envi des vérités premières dont l'accumulation et le naturalisme suscitent le rire.³³

Rire de soi relève donc de l'autosatisfaction. L'indulgente bouffonnerie des scènes exclut ainsi le plus souvent l'auto-dérision, de même qu'un naturalisme de convention en exclut le réalisme. Rares sont de fait les Jeux de revue dans lesquels un personnage se fait de réels reproches et déplore son malheur. Un fol ainsi se plaint d'avoir tout appris pour l'amour d'une belle qui le délaisse,³⁴ tandis qu'un autre connaît la tristesse pour avoir perdu son amie après qu'on l'eut dénigré.³⁵ Deux autres benêts déplorent que leurs belles les aient rejetés après qu'elles lui eurent pris tout leur argent.³⁶ Ces Jeux plus sérieux servent en fait de leçons de choses et ne prêtent pas à rire. Un valet de ferme est ainsi si paresseux

²⁷ Ibid., n° 13, p. 118.

²⁸ Ibid., n° 28, *Ein vastnachtspil*, pp. 238–41.

²⁹ Ibid., n° 45, pp. 344–45, et n° 109, *Fastnachtspil*, p. 859.

³⁰ Ibid., n° 36, *Ein spil*, p. 274, et n° 43, pp. 334–35.

³¹ Ibid., n° 64, *Ein spil von den zwelf paffenknechten*, pp. 562–64.

³² Ibid., n° 109, pp. 859–60.

³³ Ibid., n° 109, p. 858.

³⁴ Ibid., n° 38, p. 285.

³⁵ Ibid., n° 116, p. 1010.

³⁶ Ibid., n° 1008, et n° 44, pp. 339–40.

qu'il se laisse envahir les paupières, la bouche et le nez par les moustiques, si bien qu'il ne voit pas arriver une charrette qui lui broie la jambe. Un autre dort au lieu de charger des branches; un voleur dérobe alors le harnachement et le paresseux retrouve la charrette embourbée dans une mare.³⁷ Un autre encore boit trop et se blesse à la tête après avoir dévalé les escaliers.³⁸ Ces Jeux sont plus rarement encore des scènes de mœurs. La drôlerie des amours l'emporte presque toujours sur le réalisme des suites naturelles des ébats. C'est toutefois le cas de quelques Jeux; dans l'un d'eux, le fol se vante de sortir toutes les nuits, irrésistiblement attiré par les pommes; jouant avec l'arrière-train des belles et s'occupant de la partie inférieure de leur corps, il leur fait surgir une bosse grosse comme une motte de sel, et tout finit dans un berceau.³⁹ On le voit, le rire de ces Jeux est bien rarement sarcastique.

Faire rire de soi dans les Jeux requiert l'Autre; peu nombreux, ces Jeux dialogués plus proches du théâtre traditionnel traitent quasiment tous d'affaires amoureuses. Les personnages y sont presque exclusivement des naïfs dont l'ignorance, feinte, bien sûr, des choses du sexe et des réalités amoureuses fait rire. Dans un Jeu voué aux mystères du corps féminin, un naïf demande ainsi pourquoi l'homme est sur la femme; on lui rétorque qu'il est le plus fort, ce à quoi le benêt rétorque qu'il a pourtant vu une femme sur un homme; un autre lui explique que l'homme en fait a pitié de la femme et se met sur elle pour la réchauffer. D'autres questions portent sur la raison d'être de la barbe au bas du corps des femmes, alors qu'elle n'en ont pas au menton ou sur l'utilité des seins, faits, explique-t-on, pour faire ouvrir la porte du bas. Ou bien encore le membre est si fin d'oreille qu'il sort vite de ses sacs, montre la tête et retire son bonnet; ou bien encore le naïf se demande comment les femmes n'ont pas peur d'être blessées dans la lutte; on lui explique que la lance et l'écu heureusement faiblissent lorsque l'homme et la femme sont tout contre l'un de l'autre.⁴⁰ Ou bien il s'agit d'un jeune marié qui n'a pas touché sa femme et qui décrit son inexpérience; lui mettant la main en bas du corps, il tombe sur un animal piquant à la bouche grande ouverte; le benêt s'enfuit, mais renonce à frapper de son épée, car la bête ne lui a rien fait; son âne irait sinon sans problème à l'abreuvoir pour

³⁷ Ibid., n° 64, p. 565.

³⁸ Ibid., n° 116, p. 1009.

³⁹ Ibid., n° 45, p. 345; n° 109, p. 857: Le chasseur de cailles chaussées, le garçon de ferme et la servante engrossée.

⁴⁰ Ibid., n° 25, *Aber ein vasnachtspil*, pp. 224–26.

peu que l'épouse le mette bien en place.⁴¹ Lors d'une scène de préparation du mariage, le futur époux est ravi d'entendre que sa promise n'a jamais été farouche avec les hommes; cette dernière, qui a peur d'être battue, explique par contre qu'elle saura bien frapper son époux s'il le faut.⁴² Ailleurs, un paysan se plaint du compère qui, en fait de l'aider à faire son champ, a fauché celui de sa femme; l'accusé rétorque qu'il s'était déshabillé pour ce faire et qu'elle s'était jetée sur lui.⁴³ Un autre a peur pour sa fille lorsqu'il voit le voisin rôder autour du tas de fumier pour y laisser ses œuvres;⁴⁴ le double sens de la scène justifie l'inquiétude, bien naïve au demeurant, du père. Un autre benêt se demande s'il doit s'inquiéter lorsqu'il voit des hommes toucher les fesses et les seins de sa femme; elle se met certes en colère, mais il jurerait qu'ils lui tapent sur le tambour.⁴⁵ Un plaignant au tribunal fait rire par la franchise de son propos et par l'incongruité du comportement de l'accusé; ce dernier dansait avec une femme et lui mit son sexe dans la main, prétendant qu'elle l'y avait invité; elle faillit bien le lui arracher. Dans ce même Jeu, une fille a eu si peur du galant qu'elle mit au monde un enfant; l'accusé explique que la fille avait mal à la dent et qu'il lui mit pour remède le sexe dans la bouche.⁴⁶ Comme dans les Jeux précédents, la scatologie se mêle parfois aux affaires du sexe. C'est le cas du Jeu dans lequel un paysan vante les mérites d'un étron, dont il se dit avec un enthousiasme lyrique qu'il en est le père et la mère à la fois.⁴⁷

Faire rire de l'autre inverse le procédé et le sens du regard. Qu'il s'agisse de scènes de mariage à organiser ou de scènes de tribunal, les personnages se succèdent pour exprimer leur avis sur les fiancés ou sur les accusés. Ces Jeux sont ainsi très proches des Jeux de revue. Le rire y est aussi indulgent que dans les Jeux précédents, car l'outrance et l'exagération des propos en éloignent le contenu de tout réalisme. Le sexe en est une fois encore l'objet exclusif et concerne tantôt les avantages présentés par les futurs mariés, tantôt le châtement que méritent les

⁴¹ Ibid., n° 42, p. 325; et n° 32, p. 259.

⁴² Ibid., n° 7, Ein spil, ein hochzeit zu machen, pp. 71 et 73.

⁴³ Ibid., n° 10, Aber ein vasnachtspil, pp. 98–99.

⁴⁴ Ibid., n° 24, p. 221.

⁴⁵ Ibid., n° 32, p. 261.

⁴⁶ Ibid., n° 24, pp. 219–20.

⁴⁷ Ibid., n° 23, Ein vasnachtspil vom dreck, pp. 216–17. Voir notre article 'L'horrible et le risible dans les Jeux allemands de Carnaval au XV^e siècle', dans *L'horrible et le risible*, édition spéciale, *Humoresques*, 14 (juin 2001), 33–45.

accusés au tribunal. Pour les scènes de mariage, le rire tient soit à l'évocation naturaliste des charmes de la fiancée, soit à l'antiphrase, soit au double sens. Un père vante ainsi sans fard les parties du corps de sa fille propices aux ébats.⁴⁸ Les paysans invités à dire leur avis ne tarissent pas sur l'expérience sexuelle de la fille,⁴⁹ et le portrait que les pères font de leur fille sont autant de critiques, hormis que la rusticité quasi animale des belles exprime à leurs yeux la santé paysanne et leur adéquation vis-à-vis de leur environnement professionnel.⁵⁰ L'un des paysans chargés de se prononcer sur le mariage évoque en outre les biens fonciers que la belle apporte en dot. En citant une prairie, qui porte pour doux nom celui de la primevère, et la source jaillissante qui l'agrémente, l'auteur du Jeu présente un locus agreste que les deux vers qui suivent tournent aussitôt en dérision: ce lieu qui devrait être intime — et il l'est certes, mais dans une tout autre acception — devient dans l'un de ces Jeux un lieu public que beaucoup fréquentent déjà, dans un autre Jeu un pré troué par les taupes; et la source, image dans le topos traditionnel des épanchements mesurés et maîtrisés, loin d'apporter ici l'aristocratique fraîcheur de l'idylle, inonde dans l'un des Jeux une prairie toujours mouillée qui ne voit jamais le soleil et ne produit jamais d'herbe bonne et belle. Complétant dans les deux cas cette évocation suspecte par la mention d'un large champ, situé tout à côté, et qui a pour qualité première de se fournir lui-même abondamment en fumure, l'auteur du Jeu dénature, par ce constant double sens d'un lieu rustique et du corps de la femme, le topos du *locus amoenus*.⁵¹ Il lui retire sa fonction esthétique pour le détourner vers la fertilité agricole et l'opulence scatologique d'une nature généreuse, c'est-à-dire ici de la promesse dont le futur époux a déjà évoqué très brièvement, mais sans fard, les charmes du devant comme du derrière. Tant il est vrai que le double sens permet dans les Jeux d'en dire beaucoup plus que les mots trop crus de l'anatomie et du sexe.

Un personnage fait donc rire des deux futurs époux, bénéficiaires ou victimes du mariage. Dans les Jeux de tribunal, on rit en général de l'accusé pour lequel les jureurs proposent toutes sortes de sentences drolatiques: on veut l'envoyer en Hongrie pour y faire aux juments des poulains, ou au moulin pour instrumentaliser son sexe, ou à la porcherie pour en faire un balai.⁵² Ou bien on veut lui faire

⁴⁸ Von Keller, *Fastnachtspiele aus dem 15. Jahrhundert*, n° 7, p. 67.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 69; et n° 58, Ein vasnachtspil, p. 516.

⁵⁰ Ibid., n° 71; et n° 58, p. 513.

⁵¹ Ibid., n° 58, p. 517; et n° 7, p. 70.

⁵² Ibid., n° 10, pp. 100–01.

boire de l'eau jusqu'à ce que son onzième doigt retombe, ou le faire asseoir dans l'eau pour lui paralyser la bûche, ou bien le purger pour lui faire perdre l'envie de se battre avec la perche qui lui pend près du trou de cheminée, ou bien encore le lui couper pour qu'il ne fasse plus les foin dans les prés d'en bas, sis dans le sombre val.⁵³ Mais on rit aussi parfois du plaignant. L'accusé justifie ainsi son adultère en accusant en retour le mari, qui aurait raconté partout qu'une truie lui a coupé le membre après qu'il eut fait l'amour sur un tas de fumier.⁵⁴ Le paysan qui n'a pas tenu sa promesse de mariage explique au tribunal que la belle s'en est plainte à son confesseur, lequel lui a tâté l'arrière-train et lui a mis, sans qu'elle y ait vu du mal, le poisson dans la nasse.⁵⁵ On rit sinon encore de la victime, qu'il s'agisse du mari trompé ou de filles séduites. Les acteurs d'un Jeu connaissent ainsi une auberge où ils vont se battre sur les genoux; le patron leur a prêté la servante, mais la patronne, jeune, alerte et plus accueillante que son mari sait aussi lutter sur le dos; en cachette, elle porte les clients pour quelque argent, sept fois pour un sou, dans sa belle robe blanche sous laquelle pointent ses petits seins.⁵⁶ Dans deux Jeux de revue relatifs à divers métiers, la marchande achète les vieux chiffons que ne portent plus les filles, les chemises que les garçons leur ont déchirées en y mettant les mains après avoir farfouillé dans le bas de leur corps;⁵⁷ et le ramoneur libère des cheminées corporelles la vieille suie mêlée à la filasse; mais s'il reçoit quelque poussière dans les yeux, il brûlera la cheminée avec un brûlot de paille.⁵⁸

L'étroit système de corrélations entretenues par les trois modalités du rire permet de passer aisément de l'une à l'autre de ces formes. Les sots des Jeux rient d'eux-mêmes, mais c'est pour faire rire les autres. Rire de soi et faire rire de soi sont en effets très proches. Les fols carnavalesques peuvent par ailleurs se permettre de faire rire des autres du fait qu'ils s'appliquent d'abord et principalement à eux-mêmes les règles du rire. Dans l'auberge où se passent les Jeux, le rire est collectif; tout le monde rit de tout et de tous. Cette proximité des modalités du rire explique la constance et la similitude des thèmes qu'on y trouve. Cela vaut pour le portrait des scènes de mariage ou d'amour; le père fait rire de sa fille

⁵³ Ibid., n° 29, Ein vasnachtspil, pp. 242–43.

⁵⁴ Ibid., n° 24, p. 222.

⁵⁵ Ibid., n° 109, p. 854.

⁵⁶ Ibid., n° 99, p. 760.

⁵⁷ Ibid., n° 50, Ein spil, p. 375.

⁵⁸ Ibid., n° 105, p. 789.

dans l'éloge biaisé qu'il en fait; elle fait rire d'elle-même dans l'auto-portrait naïf qu'elle trace; et le fol d'un Jeu de revue s'amuse à décrire sa propre laideur, tout en ajoutant qu'il adore tout de même qu'on l'aime.⁵⁹ Il en va de même pour le motif si prisé de l'âne au pré. Il y a d'abord l'auto-satisfaction du fol qui veut bien prêter son âne à la femme insatiable de son compère; il possède en effet, dit-il, un âne fort et robuste, qui supporte sans plier de jolis poids de viande, qui ne craint ni trou ni borbier et avec lequel les femmes oublient tout chagrin pour peu qu'elles le fassent bouger dans la fente.⁶⁰ Le paysan qui se plaint que son voisin a retourné le champ de sa femme fait rire de lui-même.⁶¹ Et la paysanne qui se plaint de l'inexpérience de son mari fait rire de ce dernier dans l'évocation des tentatives qu'elle fait pour mener l'âne au pré d'herbe bien verte; elle le prend par les oreilles et par la tête; elle lui caresse le front, mais elle ne parvient pas à le réveiller; il ne peut rien faire sur la viole; elle va toutefois essayer encore de prendre le poisson dans la nasse.⁶² Il en va de même encore pour le motif du tuyau d'arrosage. Il y a l'auto-satisfaction du fol qui montre à sa belle son tuyau; effrayée, elle tombe à la renverse; après qu'il lui eut montré quelque tour, elle voudrait que le tuyau soit raccordé à une source afin qu'elle puisse s'en servir nuit et jour: elle ne restera jamais plus sans galant.⁶³ Il y a aussi la sentence d'un échevin qui voudrait qu'on attache un poids au tuyau d'arrosage de l'accusé pour l'habituer à pendouiller.⁶⁴

Rire est le propre des Jeux. Le préambule de nombre d'entre eux annonce d'emblée que les acteurs font les fous pour qu'on en rie;⁶⁵ leur seul but est de créer la bonne humeur et la liesse.⁶⁶ Le temps des Jours Gras n'est pas en effet celui de la sagesse,⁶⁷ et les acteurs ne sont ni moines ni nonnes.⁶⁸ Dans les auberges de Nuremberg, les spectateurs étaient tout autant déguisés en fous, c'est-à-dire en paysans, que les acteurs. Ces Jeux sont un délassement

⁵⁹ Ibid., n° 32, p. 261.

⁶⁰ Ibid., n° 45, p. 347.

⁶¹ Ibid., n° 10, pp. 98–99.

⁶² Ibid., n° 42, p. 326.

⁶³ Ibid., n° 94, *Di vasnacht von der müllnerein*, p. 731.

⁶⁴ Ibid., n° 29, p. 244.

⁶⁵ Ibid., n° 9, *Ein vasnachtspil*, p. 91; et n° 94, p. 734.

⁶⁶ Ibid., n° 10, p. 97.

⁶⁷ Ibid., n° 35, p. 227.

⁶⁸ Ibid., n° 29, p. 246.

communautaire tout empreint de la convivialité d'hommes et de femmes rassemblés pour manger, boire et danser, pour écouter l'un ou l'autre raconter quelque histoire et faire quelque Jeu de mot salace, l'excellence de l'ambiance reposant sur la participation de chacun. Les Jeux étaient en effet la forme scénique et organisée de distractions collectives dans lesquelles le public était tour à tour acteur et spectateur. Il y régnait une connivence, une complicité entre les spectateurs et les acteurs; ces derniers n'étaient d'ailleurs autres que les parents ou les amis des premiers.⁶⁹ Les Jeux spécifient bien en effet que les acteurs sont venus en amis, *in freintschaft*.⁷⁰ Loin d'être un rire d'exclusion, le rire des Jeux soude une communauté, et le 'nous' que les acteurs emploient rassemble tout le public de l'auberge, *uns narrn*;⁷¹ ce qui compte, c'est le rassemblement, *aufgesammet*, des jeunes citadins venus rire des gens.⁷² La solidarité dans le rire est celle de l'appartenance à un même ordre social momentané, celui des fols de Carnaval, *in dem selben orden*,⁷³ ordre qui, en fait, réunit l'ensemble des médiévaux livrés à la liesse des Jours Gras. Le Carnaval en effet fait les fous,⁷⁴ reflets de la folie des hommes en général, tous attachés à la même charrette,⁷⁵ incités par un rire libérateur à la catharsis. Les Jeux servaient ainsi, par la fuite dans une verbalité outrancière, à libérer des besoins refoulés par un mode d'existence excessivement réglementé.

⁶⁹ Voir notre article 'Le rire dans les Jeux de Carnaval allemands', in *Le Rire au Moyen Âge dans la littérature et dans les arts: Actes du colloque international des 17, 18 et 19 novembre 1988*, ed. by Thérèse Bouché and Hélène Charpentier (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1990), pp. 237–46.

⁷⁰ Von Keller, *Fastnachtspiele aus dem 15. Jahrhundert*, n° 18, Ein spil von dem einliften finger, p. 154, v. 6; et n° 69, Der bauern rugvasnacht, p. 612, v. 21.

⁷¹ Ibid., n° 32, p. 258, v. 5.

⁷² Ibid., n° 86, Vom heiraten spil, p. 700, v. 19.

⁷³ Ibid., n° 32, p. 263, v. 11.

⁷⁴ Ibid., n° 9, p. 92, v. 2: 'Di vasnacht kan vil narren machen.'

⁷⁵ Ibid., n° 38, p. 287, v. 11: 'Span sie uns all in einen karren.'

Reynard and *Renardie* Revisited

THE PASSAGE OF THE FOX FROM ONE FICTITIOUS WORLD TO ANOTHER IN THE *ROMAN DE RENART*

Kenneth Varty

Some of the most memorably comic moments and effects in the *Roman de Renart* have to do with the transition from one state of affairs to another and they often involve the depiction of the animals first as animals then as humans and then back to being animals again, a process which is often linked to a technique which distances the reader (or listener) from the actions of the protagonists, and from the consequences of those actions.

The relatively sudden transformation of the animal into a human being and then back to being an animal happens frequently in the earlier branches, less frequently in most of the later ones, especially in the ones in which the animals act more like human beings most of the time,¹ where they are animals largely in name only. As a consequence, they are generally much less comic. Some later authors of animal tales descended from the *Roman de Renart* clearly recognized the comic potential of the animal-human mix, and in particular the handling of the passing from animal nature to the ways of humans and back, and made great capital out of it. For example, although the source of the comedy lies largely elsewhere in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, Chaucer was to prove himself as great a master of this technique as was Pierre de Saint-Cloud, though he employs it differently and far more gradually at the point of transition. For example, when he comes to the end of Chauntecleer's long-winded attempt to explain the significance of dreams, the pompous know-it-all human male voice becomes that of a cock talking to a hen, first with just the odd word then, after a line or two, he returns to being the farmyard creature he really is:

¹ See for example Branch XI, *Renart empereur: Le Roman de Renart*, ed. and trans. by Jean Dufournet and Andrée Méline, 2 vols (Paris: Flammarion, 1985), II, 280–85.

Now lat us speke of myrthe, and stynte al this.
 Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
 Of o thyng God hath sent me large grace;
 For whan I se the beautee of youre face,
 Ye been so *scarlet-reed* aboute youre eyen,
 It maketh al my drede for to dyen [. . .]
 For when I feele a-nyght your softe syde,
 Al be it that I may nat on yow *ryde*,
 For that oure *perche* is maad so narwe, allas,
 I am so ful of joye and of solas,
 That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem.
 And with that word he *fly down fro the beam*,
 For it was day, and eke his *hennes alle*,
 And with a *chuk* he gan hem for to calle,
 For he had founde a *corn*, *lay in the yerd*.
 Real he was, he was namoore aferd.
 He *fethered* Pertelote twenty tyme,
 And *trad* as ofte, er that it was pryme.²

Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale* contains much less violence than the *Roman de Renart*, a fact which brings me back to the opening paragraph in which I mention the occasional use of distancing in connection with this comic anthropomorphic technique. Some distancing is necessary, I suspect, for the success of any kind of comedy in which violence plays a major role, and both physical and psychological violence play a truly major role in the *Roman de Renart*. The threat of violence hovers over almost every episode and it erupts with unfailing regularity to overwhelm or severely harm protagonist after protagonist. If for even one moment we identified with either the one who commits the violence or the one who suffers it, we would surely not find it funny. If we laugh at the dapper stranger, oozing confidence, carrying his umbrella and briefcase, when he slips on a banana skin and falls flat on his back, it is surely because there is a sudden reversal of fortune: the decorous image is suddenly replaced by a non-decorous one (this juxtaposition of opposites is of course a vital ingredient in producing a comic effect), and his being a stranger and the suddenness of the event prevent any kind of identification with him on our part; and we laugh. But if this were someone we knew and loved, or even liked just a little, we would probably not laugh. And if it were a frail old lady who was even a total stranger to us, we would certainly

² Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, ed. by Nevill Coghill and Christopher Tolkien (London: Harrap, 1959), vv. 391–412. My italics.

not laugh, partly because the decorous/non-decorous contrast was absent and partly because pity would have been evoked even as we saw her slip.

The animated cartoon often features animals in violent (or potentially violent) situations who manage to make us laugh. Surely this is in part because they are *animals*, not human beings and, in addition, *cartoon* animals. The mini-farces of Tom and Jerry are full of violence, yet we laugh because we are kept at a distance. Furthermore, the violence proves again and again to have no really painful effects on our cartoon heroes. Jerry fires a cannon ball at Tom. It hits him in the mouth, knocking all his teeth out. They fall in fragments to the ground leaving him cross-eyed and apparently grinning an inane grin. The cannon ball continues on its trajectory, first causing a great bulge at the back of Tom's head; then he swallows it and it bursts out of the end of his tail after travelling along it like an ostrich egg going down a pelican's neck. But seconds later, Tom has a new set of teeth and a fully restored tail and is continuing his chase after Jerry. The latter runs into the path of a car and is flattened like a pancake, but only for a second. With a plop he's back to normal and heading for his hole in the skirting board.

This sort of thing happens quite often in the *Roman de Renart*. One of the funniest animated-cartoon-like examples of distancing which springs to mind occurs in Branch Ib, generally known as *Renart Teinturier et Jongleur*, when Renart and Isengrin go, at night, to steal a *vielle* from a peasant.³ They make for a window and climb through. Or, rather, Isengrin climbs through as Renart stays behind and then deliberately slams the window to, awakening both the peasant and his dog. Isengrin's passage through the window is a bit like Alice's passage through the looking glass. Till now the fox and the wolf have talked, plotted, and acted like two human beings called Renart and Isengrin. Now Isengrin, inside the peasant's house, turns into a wolf in the world of human beings. In no time at all the wolf has the bent-over peasant's bottom gripped firmly between its jaws, and the peasant's dog has the wolf's bottom between *its* jaws. This would be a highly comic moment in an animated cartoon, a moment depicting three creatures connected by two of their bottoms each held firmly in the jaws of another. Eventually the wolf frees himself only by leaving behind, in the dog's jaws, his male member.

That we are now in a kind of animated cartoon is confirmed by the fact (a fictional fact) that Isengrin goes home (and home is in a human kind of setting) not in physical pain but in mental anguish at the thought of having to explain

³ *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. and trans. by Dufournet and Méline, vv. 2205–3212 (I, 154–207).

his loss to his wife. Her passionate desire later that night for sexual intercourse becomes comic as Isengrin counters it with all sorts of excuses (he does not feel like it; he is tired; it is the eve of a saint's day) including his explanation for his missing member (he has lent it to a nun), an explanation accepted as a fact by his wife, but rejected by her as unfair and inconsiderate. Thus, when Isengrin bolted out of the peasant's house minus his bitten-off male member, he shot back, quite suddenly, into the world where animals act like human beings, but human beings in that kind of animated cartoon where pain is not really experienced by the protagonists, and certainly not imagined by the viewer. We are kept firmly in our cinema seats at a distance from the screen, and made to accept that these are not real people with whom we could possibly identify. This kind of distancing (mental, emotional, psychological) is not by any means unique to the *Roman de Renart*; but it happens much too often in the earlier branches to allow the argument sometimes advanced about gradual changes in the animal/human mix in the French Beast Epic to go unchallenged.

Nor, for that matter, is another kind of distancing, which might be labelled 'physical' distancing, unique to the *Roman de Renart*. By this I mean the physical separation of the protagonists who would otherwise engage in violent, probably mortal, combat. This physical distancing prolongs the tension which the hovering, threatening menace of violence creates and makes it possible for the cunning machinations of the duper to unfold entertainingly before us. This is often very simply done as in the Branch II version of the fable of the fox and the crow perched in a tree with its cheese,⁴ or of the episode involving the fox and the cock perched on the roof of the hen-house.⁵

What makes this kind of distancing particularly successful in the *Roman de Renart* is its being linked to a kind of Alice-through-the-looking-glass technique, as in the Branch IV story of the fox and the wolf in the well.⁶ Up to the point where Renart accidentally falls into the bucket and thence down to the bottom of the well, he is primarily a fox, a fox which has raided a hen house and slaked its hunger on some hens and is now trying to quench its thirst. But the fall into the well brings it, and us, into another fictitious world, and in a way that the mirror of the water's surface metaphorically resembles Alice's looking glass. Soon Isengrin passes by and looks down the well. He sees Renart and at his side his

⁴ *Renart et Tiécelin le corbeau*, vv. 843–1026 (ibid., I, 251–61).

⁵ *Renart et Chanteclerc le coq*, vv. 1–469 (ibid., I, 208–33).

⁶ *Renart et Isengrin dans le puits*, ibid., I, 308–33.

own reflection which he stupidly assumes to be his wife up to no good, yet again, with Renart.

The fox is often endowed by the authors of the *Roman de Renart* with a quick and vivid imagination which enables him to don with incredible speed an unexpected kind of disguise which heightens the impression of a transition from one fictitious world to another. He announces to Isengrin that he is in fact dead; he is now a spirit in the spirit world. He is in Paradise where all good things to eat are found in plenty (things especially tasty to a wolf!). If Isengrin will confess his sins he may, by getting into the Balance or the Scales of Divine Justice (i.e. into the other bucket, now at the top of the well), be admitted to Paradise too. The conversation between the fox and the wolf is all too human, comically touching on theological problems concerning confession, salvation, and life after death. We are indeed in another world, more human, animated-cartoon-human, perhaps, than animal. When, in due course, each animal gets out of the well, it returns to the animal world of foxes and wolves, the wolf being badly beaten by the monks who find it in their well.

There is one particular, sudden transition from one kind of fictitious world to another in the *Roman de Renart* which is especially important because it became the springboard for so much else in this epic. It occurs in what is traditionally described as Pierre de Saint-Cloud's *Roman de Renart*, Martin's Branches II + Va.⁷ This begins with the mini mock epic/romance which features Renart, Chantecler, and Pinte. It extends over 450 octosyllabic lines and takes place entirely around and within the poultry yard of the farmer Constant des Noues. These creatures, the fox, cock, and hen, speak to each other as if they were at least members of the minor aristocracy, but they are motivated chiefly by the instincts of the animals they really are. There is a particularly well-balanced mix of animal/human characteristics here, but not a word suggests that they are subjects of Noble the Lion, or indeed that there are any other animals in the world but them. This tale is followed by three more much shorter ones, rather like expanded Aesopian fables: the fox and the titmouse, the fox and the cat, the fox and the crow. In the first two a few words suggest that these pairs of animals may indeed be somewhere in Noble's kingdom, especially the first, for it contains an allusion to the King's Peace. It is, however, at the beginning of the last of the five tales which make up this branch (II) that Renart goes metaphorically (and, in order of composition, chronologically for the first time) through an Alice-like looking glass and into Noble's kingdom. He stumbles into, and then down, a

⁷ Ibid., I, 208–279 and 346–401.

hole, a hole that turns out to be the entrance to the castle-den of his arch-enemy, Isengrin. Minutes before, he had been resting below a tree like an ordinary fox, satisfied by the cheese it had got from a crow. Now he finds himself on his feet (on his two rear feet?), rather like a courtier-baron, just outside the bedroom of the lady-wife of the king's Constable. She is in bed suckling new-born offspring. In only a very short time she's beckoning to him with her slender index finger to come and join her in bed.

This transition and transformation are both quite remarkable; the anthropomorphic changes are as sudden and different as the setting is. While comic effects do flow from these changes, I think they are, to begin with, partly accidental, the result of a man (perhaps Pierre de Saint-Cloud) welding together tales that were once separate and told by other storytellers, each with his different view of the degree of animality in his protagonists. But Pierre de Saint-Cloud goes on to make wonderfully comic capital out of this animal-human switch, not least when he tells how Isengrin and Hersent are hunting like ordinary wolves and come across Renart similarly occupied like an ordinary fox. Bent on revenge, the wolves give chase. The fox makes for his den, closely pursued by Hersent, the lighter and swifter of the two wolves. Renart disappears into the narrow entrance to his den. Hersent unwisely follows at great speed and gets stuck. He emerges from his emergency exit and sees her plight, stuck half in, half out of the entrance to his den, and quickly takes advantage of the situation. As Isengrin appears through a thicket to witness the rape, Pierre de Saint-Cloud turns his animals back into humans and has Isengrin cry out: "Hai, Renart, or bellement! / Par les sainz Dieu mar m'i honnistes" to which Renart replies:

'Pour Dieu, biau sire, ne creez
Que nulle rien i ai faite
Ne draps levez, ne braie traite.' (vv. 1302-03; 1312-14)

And so on.

Similar sudden switches happen in other branches which seem to me to be much more obviously collections of previously independent, shorter tales, each with its own differing animal/human mix. Two of the most striking cases of this welding together of once 'independent' tales are Branches XIII and XI, respectively *Renart en Noir* and *Renart Empereur*.⁸ In each of these long, anthological branches, we pass from tales in which Renart is primarily a fairly ordinary fox

⁸ *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by Ernest Martin, 4 vols (Strasbourg: Trübner; Paris: Leroux, 1882-87), II (1882), 43-108, vv. 1-2366; summarized by Dufournet and Méline, II, 280-85.

pitting its wits against other fairly realistically 'natural' victims of the fox, to a wily courtier, deceiving (or attempting to deceive) other courtiers, and perpetrating violent crimes upon them. But the transition from the one to the other is not as smooth as this last remark may suggest. Take, for example, *Renart en Noir*. This branch begins with a story of some 845 lines which could be detached from all that follows. It stands on its own and might be entitled *Les peaux de goupil*. It is set firmly in the world of aristocratic human beings, and primarily in a feudal lord's castle and his entourage. Here a fox which happens to be called Renart by the author, but a fox, a pretty ordinary fox, finds a hiding place when he's being hunted, inside the lord's castle. It is only when it is discovered hanging from some beams among drying fox skins and is chased out into the open countryside that this fox changes from a 'natural' fox (which, nevertheless had learned to climb and suspend itself from a beam) into the villainous hero of the *Roman de Renart*. This change does not happen, however, until the fox has arrived at the beginning of the next very short story, a story of only fifty lines which might be called *Renart et la corneille*. In it, Renart captures a rook by using the bestiary fox's trick of feigning death. But there are no striking human characteristics or features included here: there is no anthropomorphism. (The 'natural' fox has been observed feigning death to capture carrion birds.) Then, in the next tale, there is a lurch, a sharp lurch, into the humanizing of our hero. This is still a short tale, only 111 lines long, a tale which might be called *Renart et le batelier*. Here Renart is being swept along by the current of a flooding river when he is rescued by a passing boatsman who is rewarded for his pains by being pushed out of his boat which Renart then commandeers. Renart at last speaks, and imitates human action; he rows the boat. This is followed by a relatively independent short story (eighty-one lines) and might be called *Renart batelier*. But we are jolted here, and abruptly, into a remote corner of Noble's kingdom where animals act very much like human beings; for here Renart meets two of Noble's most eminent subjects: Isengrin and Hersent. And it is only from here on (over one thousand lines from the beginning of the branch as it is usually presented) that it deserves the title *Renart le Noir*. For, on seeing Isengrin and Hersent in the distance, Renart quickly disguises himself by dyeing his fur black before approaching them with his boat and offering to ferry them to an island in the river. After leading Isengrin into a trap and abandoning him on the island, Renart reveals his true identity to Hersent and they make passionate love in the bottom of the boat.

Much the same degree of anthropomorphism characterizes the next tale. The boat on which Renart floats into the ferryman story is the only (superficial) link

with the preceeding one (*Renart le batelier*); and it forms the first link with the next story of 244 lines, which could be entitled *L'Alliance de Renart et de Roonel*. In this tale Renart completes his disguise by calling himself Choflet. Totally unrecognizable as Renart, he pretends to befriend his old enemy the dog only to lead him too into a trap in a vineyard where he is grievously wounded. On escaping, Roonel makes straight for Noble's palace where he lays formal complaints against the black stranger called Choflet. In this way the journey from the remote region of the human, feudal lord's castle in the story about the fox skins, via the river and a vineyard, to the centre of Noble's animal kingdom is completed. At the same time several transitions and transformations have taken place in the anthologist-storyteller's way of looking at and portraying his protagonist. Others are to follow.

In the next story (290 lines) which could be entitled *L'Alliance entre Renart et Roussel l'ecureuil* we find that Renart has, at its beginning, reverted to being a relatively ordinary fox going about its business on all fours just like the squirrel. But in the middle of this story we are told that, on awakening after a good night's sleep (here the falling asleep acts a bit like the passing through the magic looking glass image used above), they put on clothes (they did not seem to wear any the day before), wash their face and hands, and go hunting on horseback (where, one wonders, did the horses come from?). It is at the end of this story that its author, or, more probably, the anthologist-storyteller, begins to pull all the threads together which, retrospectively, bind the last three stories together (in all of which Renart is disguised by his black fur) and link them to the stories which follow. For here, at the end of the fox and squirrel story, Renart treacherously attacks Roussel who escapes and promptly makes for Noble's court to lay a formal complaint against him. This is followed by renewed complaints by Roonel and Isengrin. Noble feels obliged to act, and from this point onwards we are taken through a well-unified series of episodes extending over one thousand lines which lead to Renart's capture, trial, threatened punishment, and last-minute escape from the hands of his enemy-peers assembled at the royal court. It is here, in the last one thousand lines, that we see the kind of judicial conflict which characterizes parts of some serious French *chansons de geste*; and we seem to be more in the presence of human beings rather than animals.

This kind of inconsistency in the portrayal of the protagonists, this quite sudden switching in the portrayal of the protagonists from tale to tale, episode to episode, and even within episodes, often accompanied by fierce violence which may be physical or mental (or both), usually contributes a great deal to the comic qualities of the whole, and seems to me to be especially characteristic of the

Roman de Renart, if not unique to it. In the earlier branches where the authors often use what I have called the Alice-through-the-looking-glass technique, the comic effects are quite powerful, linked as they are to processes of psychological and physical distancing. But in the later branches, these effects are less powerful, less frequent, even accidental, and often seem to be due to the efforts of storyteller-anthologists who weld disparate parts together as they make their own contributions to the whole.

HERSENT'S HISTORY: THE UNMARKED STORY IN THE *ROMAN DE RENART*

Mary Jane Schenck

The rhizomorphic nature of the *Roman de Renart* with its multiple manuscripts and branches has offered medieval audiences and modern followers of the fox, including our esteemed colleague Brian Levy, whom we salute with this volume, many opportunities to gather for good conversations, good food, as well as many a good guffaw. No one enjoyed all of the above more than he, and few did more to promote the study of the *Roman de Renart* and the fabliaux. It is with admiration for his work, appreciation for his friendship over more than twenty-five years, and deep sadness that I offer this reflection on the order and segmentation of several branches to determine whether codicological evidence offers us any new perspective on the importance of the rape of Hersent in the context of all the Renart stories.

Descriptions of the fourteen complete and sixteen partial manuscripts of the *Roman de Renart* are found in the introductions to the major editions, beginning with Martin's of the late 1800s¹ and continuing through those of Roques,²

¹ *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by E. Martin, 3 vols (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1882–87; repr., Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973). Both the letters for the manuscripts and the Roman numerals used for branches are original to this edition. Martin's is based on MS A for Branches I–XIV, with lacunae filled by reference to MS D.

² *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by M. Roques, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 6 vols (Paris: Champion, 1948–63). Based on MS B.

Fukumoto, Harano, and Suzuki,³ and Strubel and others,⁴ each of which edit principally one manuscript. There are partial editions also. Lodge and Varty published the early branches, and Varty has written extensively on the manuscripts.⁵ Other contemporary editions/translations in paperback format, such as Dufournet and Méline's,⁶ based on the Martin edition, and Combarieu and Subrenat's understandably do not include lengthy considerations of the manuscripts.⁷ Often, critical studies begin with a wistful comment that each manuscript arranges the branches in its own way, suggesting that one wished to make better sense of them but couldn't.

Despite the fact that one of the most fascinating aspects of the *Roman de Renart* is its 'branchings', the anonymity of its authors, its cross-referencing of characters and events, and the seeming disregard for any logical sequencing of the tales in the manuscripts, the desire to find order on the part of critics remains high. So too, for the general reader. Each time we teach these texts, we have to explain why Branch I comes after Branch II which is followed immediately by Branch Va, the latter two being written first, supposedly by a Pierre de Saint-Cloud, otherwise unknown. There is, of course, the possibility of taking a post-modern stance, embracing the fragmentation, finding that at its centre there is perhaps no centre at all and only a counterfeit of the search for origins, as in Scheidegger's well-argued interpretation.⁸

For those who search, however, for connections and a logic within the story of Renart, the natural thing has been to place the rape of Hersent that occurs at the end of Branch II as the motor for Branch Va, 'Le Serment', the later Branch I, 'Le Jugement', and the even later-written Branch VI, 'Le Duel'. Certainly more ink has been spilled trying to understand the dating and social,

³ *Le Roman de Renart édité d'après les manuscrits C et M*, ed. by N. Fukumoto, N. Harano, and S. Suzuki (Tokyo: Librairie France-Tosho, 1983).

⁴ *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by A. Strubel and others (Paris: Gallimard, Editions de la Pléiade, 1998). Based on MS H, identified as a partial one by Fukumoto and not classed by Martin into one of the three families.

⁵ A. Lodge and K. Varty, *The Earliest Branches of the 'Roman de Renart'* (Lochee, Perthshire: Lochee Publications, 1989).

⁶ *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. and trans. by J. Dufournet and A. Méline (Paris: Flammarion, 1985).

⁷ *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by M. de Combarieu et J. Subrenat (Paris: 10/18, 1981).

⁸ J. Scheidegger, *Le Roman de Renart ou le texte de la dérision*, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 188 (Geneva: Droz, 1989).

as well as legal, issues in this central core of tales than on any other aspect of the *Roman de Renart*. Varty elaborates on the scene in the Latin predecessor story, *Ysengrimus*, and points to how a story of rape becomes a story of adultery.⁹ Gravdal credits the *Roman* with raising sexual behaviour to the level of a legal question.¹⁰ As she and others point out, the tales show the difficulty of judging a case of sexual violence against a married woman; and the charge of rape not only becomes a discussion of adultery, but also quickly gets lost under the weight of accusations against Renart for other crimes.

Nonetheless, for Gravdal, it is the rape that initiates the realistic court scenes that subvert the fundamental belief in immanent justice. Gravdal's argument clearly depends upon seeing not only a logical sequence of events, but also a progression: 'The *Renart* appears to trace the disintegration of the feudal court system that unravels from branch to branch.'¹¹ Subrenat has written on the judgement scenes and the duel, taking into account various manuscript versions, and pointing to differences among them in a detailed, descriptive rather than interpretive way, but he does assert that each family of manuscripts works 'à rétablir le droit par un véritable jugement et une véritable condamnation de Renart'.¹² Naturally, if the work as a whole is a 'legal drama', as Ziolkowski calls it,¹³ then one expects a crime, perhaps an investigation, a trial, and some consequences, in short, a somewhat logical sequence. The fact that most of the tales subvert any notion of sequence/consequence and that Renart thwarts his victims' desires for

⁹ K. Varty, 'Le Viol dans l'*Ysengrimus*, les branches II–Va et la branche I du *Roman de Renart*', in *Amour, mariage et transgressions au Moyen Âge*, ed. by D. Buschinger and A. Crépin, Goppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 420 (Göppingen: Jummerle, 1984), pp. 411–18.

¹⁰ K. Gravdal, 'Replaying Rape: Feudal Law on Trial in *Le Roman de Renart*', in *Ravishing Maidens* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 72–103.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹² J. Subrenat 'Variantes et variations dans les trois versions du serment purgatoire de Renart', in *Jeux de la variante dans l'art et la littérature du moyen âge: Mélanges offerts à Anna Drzesicka*, ed. by A. Bartosz, K. Kybel, and P. Tylus (Cracovie: Institute de Philologie Romane, 1997), pp. 38–45. Other articles include 'La Justice dans le *Roman de Renart*', in *A la recherche du 'Roman de Renart'*, ed. by Kenneth Varty, 2 vols (New Alyth, Perthshire: Lochee Publications, 1988–91), II (1991), 239–92; 'Renart et Ysengrin, Renart et Rooneel: deux duels judiciaires dans le *Roman de Renart*', in *Études de langue et de littérature françaises offertes à André Lanly* (Nancy: Publications de l'Université de Nancy II, 1980), pp. 371–84; 'Trois versions du jugement de Renart (VIIb, I, VII du ms de Cangé)', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature française du moyen âge offerts à Pierre Jonin* (Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1979), pp. 623–43.

¹³ T. Ziolkowski, *The Mirror of Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 83.

revenge is the source of the humour. It would not be funny if there were not an expected coherence. To take the parts, however, as suggesting a whole in this case is not justified. At best one could claim that a few or perhaps only one compiler saw a close link between the rape and the subsequent arrival at Noble's court.¹⁴ I have demonstrated elsewhere the inimical effect of early translations and adaptations of the *Roman de Renart* on subsequent work, still taken as authoritative, that describes these tales as the very model of a feudal trial.¹⁵

Much has been written on the mockery of the law, and for those concerned about questions of violence towards women, parodies of the courtly tradition, or the involvement of the Church in regulating marriage and sexual behaviour (all central to Gravdal's work), the rape and its judicial aftermath all make sense as 'capital' crimes. The action is clearly described as violent by Hersent at the moment of the attack, 'Renart, c'est force et force soit' (Br. II, v. 1282),¹⁶ but is the violence considered any different from that perpetrated directly or indirectly by Renart on other characters (Dame Copée's death or Brun's scalping)? How is the scene 'marked' as highly significant? Is there any possibility that we are in the presence of the 'Hawthorne effect'? Has so much attention been paid to this part by editors and critics that it has come to be considered the key motivation for the war between Ysengrin and Renart? As Busby reminds us in his *Codex and Context*,¹⁷ we must not in our search for interpretations ignore the codicological evidence. So I am asking, can the order and segmentation of the branches, rubrics, titles, and explicits give us any better idea of the importance of the rape scene in the overall scheme of the adventures of Renart?

The order of the branches in the Renart manuscripts is not as random as it may seem when looking at a chart like Büttner's.¹⁸ The question is whether it is

¹⁴ Only in the beta family, see below, pp. 298–99.

¹⁵ M. J. Schenck, 'Paulin Paris' Influence on Writing about the Feudal Trial in the *Roman de Renart*', forthcoming in *Reinardus*, 18.

¹⁶ *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. and trans. by Dufournet and Méline.

¹⁷ K. Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols, Faux Titre, 221–22 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002).

¹⁸ H. Büttner, *Die Überlieferung des 'Roman de Renart' und die Handschrift O* (Strasbourg: K. J. Trübner, 1891). NB: The chart presenting the manuscripts uses Martin's identifying letters for the manuscripts and numbers for the branches they contain running across the page in order of placement. He has converted Martin's roman numerals to arabics. This fold-out page/chart in the hardcopy in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France had been pasted such that one line of numbers for branches is obscured. Looking at the microform copy of the same chart revealed all of the numbers.

possible to understand the rationale of the compiler when he placed these stories, written by a variety of authors at different times, in his given order; and, does order in the manuscript have any significance? A consideration of all the manuscripts or all the branches, even those closely related to the legal issues, is too broad and complicated to be taken up here, so I have limited myself to questions surrounding Branches II and Va. We have to begin with a question of the numbering of the branches which would seem to be quite innocent, but is not.

The first 'modern' edition by Martin may have begun the tendency to want to find order where there may be none because, rather than identifying the branches by titles or rubrics (found in several of the manuscripts), he assigned them numbers.¹⁹ In doing so, he created an overwhelming bias in favour of considering them some sort of 'sequence'. Moreover, Büttner, the first person to lay out visually the order of these branches in each of the fourteen major manuscripts, built on Martin's work and only reinforced this sense by using Martin's numbers.

The confusion about numbers and sequences has been addressed several times. Mario Roques renumbered the branches, basing his edition on MS B, (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fonds fr. 371 of the beta family) and the order of its tales. Fukumoto, Harano, and Suzuki present their edition of MS C (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fonds fr. 1579 of the gamma family) as a series of *unités* while preserving references to both Martin's and Roques's branch numbers on each page of text and providing an elaborate chart in their introduction that shows incipits and branch numbers across three editions (Méon, Martin, and Roques). Strubel and others in their edition of MS H use numbers that correspond directly to the order of presentation in the *manuscrit*

¹⁹ Martin not only assigned numbers but also the letters to the manuscripts (thus privileging his *manuscrit de base*, A). He also established the three families of manuscripts that are still largely accepted, although Varty has proposed a modification. The three families are as follows: MSS A, D, E, F, G, and N belong to alpha; MSS B, K, and L belong to the beta group; MSS C and M belong to the gamma; and O, H, and I are considered 'composite'. Varty's careful and interesting refinement of the relationship among the manuscripts and families is found principally in 'L'Economie des *Romans de Renart*', in *A la Recherche du 'Roman de Renart'*, ed. by Varty, 1 (1988), 13–49, and 'The Transformations of Pierre de Saint-Cloud's *Roman de Renart* Within the Renart Manuscripts', in *'Farai chansoneta novele': Essais sur la liberté créatrice au Moyen Age. Hommage à J.-C. Payen* (Caen: Université de Caen, 1989), pp. 419–35. He suggests that there are only two families. The alpha family: A, D, E, F, G, and a mixed or abbreviated H, I, N, and O; the gamma family: C, M, and n; and independents: B, K, and L.

de base, but they present a chart showing correspondences with other editions. Tilander had argued for a new method of numbering,²⁰ but as Varty has commented, the tradition of using Martin's numbers has so much force behind it that most scholars think it wisest to continue with them.²¹ Varty's position, moreover, is that using titles, long or short ones that he sets out clearly based on traditional labels and tituli in manuscripts, will be the better path to follow. Indeed, it does make reading about questions of order or relationships among the branches and their subsections much easier to follow, especially his own charts on the 'anthologies' of tales.²² The titles free the reader from the constant sense that one either must arrange or rearrange these tales into a logical order.

The fact is, however, that the numbers continue to force the issue of lining up the branches, hence a comment like Gravdal's cited above that implies the legal system unravels as one reads through the branches. But the dating is not well enough established and the order too arbitrary to suggest any such progression. Most importantly, the long accepted coupling of Branches II and Va has obscured the fact that they are rarely together in the manuscripts. Were the compilers all such dunces that they missed the connection?

At first one might think the numbers represent the order of Martin's base manuscript. His was a 'scientific' edition designed to overcome the faults of the first editor, Méon, who selected willy-nilly, Martin suggests, from various manuscripts, including one manuscript now completely *introuvable*. The illusion of order from his numbering system is, however, largely that. Foulet commented that if one reads selections, or worse yet reads Martin's edition straight through, one would be astonished to find nothing but disorder and illogic.²³

Martin's *manuscrit de base*, MS A (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fonds fr. 20043), starts with Branch I and continues with a portion of II (vv. 132–1024), then III through VIII, but immediately thereafter, the tales follow in this order: XII, IX, XIV, XIII, X, XI. His numbers reflect a decision, not to

²⁰ G. Tilander, 'Notes sur le texte du *Roman de Renart*', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 44 (1924), pp. 658–721 (p. 659).

²¹ K. Varty, 'De l'appellation des branches et des contes des *Romans de Renart*', in *A la recherche du 'Roman de Renart'*, 1, 7–12. I will use Varty's titles unless otherwise indicated.

²² See his essays cited in note 19 above, and 'Les Anthologies dans le *Roman de Renart*: le rôle de l'anthologiste-conteur dans la *matière de Renart*', in *A la recherche du 'Roman de Renart'*, 1, 51–77.

²³ L. Foulet, *Le Roman de Renart*, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, 211 (Paris: Champion, 1914; repr. 1968), p. 20.

follow the order of his base manuscript, but to publish in the first volume of his edition the eleven branches that appear in MSS A, B, and C, each a major manuscript in the three families, alpha, beta, and gamma. It so happens that Branch I is not the first one in the gamma group, but it is in ten of the other fourteen manuscripts. In addition to the confusion that results from 'the number one' story being both later in composition and in the chronology of Renart's 'life' story, more confusion was created by Martin's numbering of Branch II as one branch. It appears *in every manuscript* in segments 'interrupted', as it were, by 'other' branches. Effect may actually be the cause here. It is Martin who identified them as separate branches, whereas some manuscripts group sequential text in another fashion. Everyone recognizes that there are different subsections to Branch II, and one can wonder whether his labeling them as one branch has resulted in less rather than more clarity.²⁴ Another oddity is that the scene of 'Le Viol' (end of II) is separated in space in the manuscripts and numerically by Martin from 'Le Serment' (Va), although he thought they were a clear sequence. They are also rarely at the head of a manuscript. The discussion of these branches and subsections has gone on since Foulet, who considered II and Va the 'original' kernel of Renart tales by Pierre de Saint-Cloud, the one accused by the author of Branch I of leaving out the best part about what happened to Renart at Noble's court. Branch I fills in that gap with another attempted trial scene that is considered one of the best-written branches. This may account for it being placed at the head of so many manuscripts. Varty offers a carefully argued refinement of this point in discussing the 'anthologies' of texts, starting with the Pierre de Saint-Cloud material that was expanded, with the most popular one, Chantecler, taking the 'lead' in the anthologies; so, when 'Le Jugement' (Br. I) was written, it became part of another group and moved to the head of the collection, slightly eclipsing the oldest anthology.²⁵

Although Varty builds a strong case for these anthologies that move about in the collections, there is no good explanation for the anomalous situation of 'Le Viol' and 'Le Serment' being separated in the majority of manuscripts, especially those that may represent the oldest tradition. Without wanting to disregard nor

²⁴ It is separated into as many as six segments by Fukumoto, Harano, and Suzuki in their edition and by Varty, who accepts these divisions and labels them as follows: Branch II, 'Les Premières aventures', IIa 'Le Prologue', IIb 'Chantecler', IIc 'La Mésange', IId 'Tibert', IIE 'Tiécelin', IIf 'Le Viol'. Various manuscripts order these sections differently or may not include all of them.

²⁵ See note 22.

repeat all that has been said about the relationship between these two sections, I want to consider some codicological evidence that may have been overlooked, beginning with the question of order in the manuscripts.

In Martin's MS A, there is no Branch II, vv. 1025–1396, the portion called 'Le Viol'. Four of the other manuscripts in this family include the scene but start with Branch I, followed by a portion of Branch II (ending at v. 843), followed then by Branch XV ('Tibert'), then the rest of Branch II (including 'Le Viol'), then Branch III and so forth, following the order of MS A. Two other manuscripts in this family (N and n) have yet another order for branches that follow the section relating the rape. A first point to make is that, in this family, *none* of the manuscripts has 'Le Viol' followed directly by Branch V or Branch Va, 'Le Serment', although the fragmentary MS n has the rape scene followed by a small part of Va (vv. 257–88). This is merely the portion where Ysengrin excoriates Hersent and she makes the suggestion that they go to court, not the court scene itself. One could wonder whether it should simply have been considered the end of II. In the gamma family there is a similar combination of 'Le Viol', followed by a few verses of Va, then other branches (as many as four) before Va, 'Le Serment'. Only in MSS B, K, and L, the beta group (which Varty refers to as independent), does 'Le Serment' follow directly after 'Le Viol'.

Martin posits something interesting about a few of the lacunae in MS A. The numerical sequence of Branches I–VIII is intact, but he had noted that the missing *feuillet*s must have contained certain verses. As for Branch II, which has a lacuna before v. 132, Martin says the missing *feuillet* after folio 31 would have had vv. 1–131 (this would include the Prologue and first part of Chantecler) which seems reasonable enough; Branch II in the manuscript runs from vv. 133–1024, stopping just before the 'Viol' portion. Branches III ('Les Poissons') and IV ('Le Puit') follow. When it comes to a lacunae preceding Branch V, Martin says four *feuillet*s are missing after folio 40, and these would have included Branch II, vv. 1025–1396 ('Le Viol'), then Branch V, vv. 1–145 ('Le Jambon'). The manuscript continues with Branch V, vv. 145ff. ('Le Grillon'); then Va, vv. 247ff. ('Le Serment').

Thus Martin believes that Branch II would be separated such that an early portion comes before Branches III and IV, followed by 'Le Viol', then the beginning of Branch V, but not contiguous with what he labels Va. The odd thing about Martin's numbering and his assumption that the missing *feuillet*s post-folio 40 would contain Branch II, vv. 1025–1396 ('Le Viol') and V, vv. 1–145 is not so much that he separates it from other sections of Branch II, but that he places 'Le Viol' in close proximity to Va, while not making them contiguous, nor

a numerical sequence. His way of filling in the blanks may seem logical, but this exact configuration of branches would be *unique* in the *entire* corpus of fourteen manuscripts and several of the fragmentary ones.²⁶ Only the beta family (B, K, L) has these two important sections (II, vv. 1025–1394 and Va) as contiguous sections, and in this case ‘Le Viol’ is not just an isolated section but follows other sections of Branch II. So the rape of Hersent is usually not followed by ‘Le Serment’, and in some cases where it is followed by some part of what has been identified as Va, it is merely the discussion of going to court.

It is not so unusual that Martin saw these two sections as connected. What seems bizarre is that they are so often *not* put in sequence in the manuscripts. If the rape is not put first in the manuscripts and if it is not followed immediately by the court scene that would reinforce its seriousness, it may not have appeared all that important to the compilers. Furthermore, Martin’s sense of the divisions may not reflect the divisions in the manuscripts. The latter do use the term branch here and there to delimit the tales, and there are physical or visual divisions in each manuscript signalled variously by large and small initials, rubrics, tituli, or explicits. There are also miniatures in some manuscripts, but it is not possible here to address the question of their connection to segmentation or interpretation of the tales. For iconographic studies, I refer the reader to work on the illustrations of the Renard legends in miniatures and the plastic arts by Varty, Elaine Block, and most recently Busby.²⁷ What I am asking is whether the scene of the rape is signalled by any of the other markers and is there any consistency or pattern to the way it is separated off in a given manuscript.

In MS A there are no titles or rubrics, but fifteen large initials (approximately four lines each) that mark the beginning of various branches.²⁸ None of these

²⁶ The alpha family (D, E, F, G, N) and the three ‘composite’ manuscripts (O, H, and I) have the sequence as follows: Br. II, vv. 1–842, XV (‘Tibert’), then II, vv. 843ff. followed by Br. III in seven of the manuscripts and by XVI in the eighth. The fragmentary MS n (part of alpha family) has Br. II, vv. 1025–1394 followed by verses of Va (vv. 257–88), but then continues with Br. III, returns to II, then has XV, before taking up the rest of Va, ‘Le Serment’. The gamma family follows this pattern closely, i.e. II vv. 1025–1394, followed by Va, vv. 257–88, III, II, XV, XVI, and then the rest of Va, vv. 289ff.

²⁷ See the list of Varty’s relevant publications in K. Varty, *The Roman de Renart: A Guide to Scholarly Work* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998); E. Block, *Corpus of Medieval Misericords in France: XIII–XVI Century* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); and Busby, *Codex and Context*.

²⁸ Martin lists initials at I, IV, VI, VII, VIII, XII, IX, XIII, XIV, X, XI. Oddly, his list of folio numbers for initials with his identification of branches does not always correspond to the order as set out by Büttner. I think I saw large initials also at folios 7, 17, 33, and 63. The

appears at Branches II, V, or Va. The 'Viol' is, of course, missing from this manuscript, and the initial portion of II is perhaps on one of the missing folios. So this manuscript, as important as it is in the Martin and Foulet tradition, can tell us nothing about the *mise en page* of the rape scene, although it could about Va. There are, however, smaller initials throughout (two lines). Busby notes that it is not always possible to determine why the smaller initial is used at a specific point, manuscripts being largely *sui generis*, but they are not what we would refer to as paragraph markers. He says that the pen-flourished initials (in the Chrétien manuscripts) often come at adverbials, such as *quant*, but may also occur at points indicating social status, proper names, or direct speech.²⁹ From a quick scan, I could see that there is sometimes one small initial per column, sometimes none for several folios, and sometimes as many as two per column. They may, indeed, have an aesthetic *mise en page* function rather than signalling any particular narrative break. Q makes a pretty initial, and the adverbials such as *quant* are a good 'and then' sort of marker for the storyteller, but the E's and O's seem equally frequent.

MS B has nineteen rubrics although there are twenty large initials (Martin doesn't mention that there is one on folio 1). If we are looking for something that will signal Branch II in general or the rape scene in particular, we do not find anything. Martin says that folio 32 is Branch II, but the rubric reads 'Cest la branche de .R. et dy. Com il isserent de la mer'³⁰ which is Branch XXIV, 'La Création' (Büttner agrees). Martin identifies folio 47 as Branch II, v. 843, but the rubric is, 'Cest la branche come .R. dut iurer le sairement a .y.' which is Va. In this manuscript, 'Le Viol' is followed directly by Va, but there is no marker at the level of a large initial or a rubric to call attention to 'Le Viol'. The next initial is beyond Va on folio 61 at Branch VI. The absence of any mention of 'Le Viol' cannot be prudish restraint because the rubric on folio 116 reads, 'Cest la branche come .R. parfist le con' (Br. XXII).

Writing with reference to collections of exempla, fabliaux, and specifically to *La Vie des Pères*, Busby comments on the role titles played in addressing the

microfilm at the Bibliothèque Nationale was so dark and blurred that it was very difficult to work with and time did not permit requesting the original. To explore this question, the issue of the missing folios (see discussion above), correlations with branches, and subdivisions by smaller initials will require a much lengthier study, by younger eyes than mine.

²⁹ Busby, *Codex and Context*, pp. 186–201.

³⁰ Martin resolved some of the abbreviations, and where I have taken rubrics from Fukumoto and others I have done the same for those not in roman letters.

reader's need for passages of lighter reading. 'Those responsible for composing the *tituli* and rubrics were in all likelihood aware of this and formulated them accordingly, partly to disguise the proselytizing nature of the tales and partly, I would argue, to titillate.'³¹ His suggestion should be relevant to the *Roman de Renart*; the *tituli* would be better than the old well-thumbed pages. What title better to titillate than the rape of Hersent? If as Busby adds, 'the *tituli* could also be seen as enticing readers into confronting the unpalatable and the unsettling',³² then we should expect to find many markers of what is, at least for us, an extremely unpalatable episode. It is thus rather startling that Hersent's name never occurs in rubrics, *tituli*, or explicits, except for one explicit that may be later than the manuscript (see below MS N). We can't make the case that her name does not appear because names other than Renart or Ysengrin are not used in rubrics or titles; in fact, prêtre Martin and the vilain Lietard as well as Tiebert le chat are named.

As for MS C, there is one miniature on folio 1, thirty-four large initials, twenty-six rubrics, and six ink rubrics that were added later. Although the miniature shows Noble holding court, MS C begins with Branch II, not Branch I, 'Le Jugement'. I cannot see the title Martin indicates is there (*ci co . . . li romanz . . . t*), and in their edition Fukumoto and others do not record it. Folios 1–5 contain Branches II, vv. 1–22, XXIV, II vv. 1025–1396, Va, vv. 257–88; there are no rubrics, titles, or large initials to indicate separations in between any of these verses. The two subsections of Branch II that Varty designates IIa and IIb (Fukumoto and others circled numbers 1 and 6), 'Le Prologue' and 'Le Viol', are *not* marked, but folio 4 is fragmentary. Immediately following, on folio 5c, there is a rubric, 'si come .R. menja le poisson aus charretiers', that opens Branch III ('Les Poissons'). Among the titles that interest us here are those related to Branch II: folio 8 (not Br. I as Martin states), the rubric reads 'Conme renart prist chantecler le coc' making it IIb; folio 69a 'De .R. si conme il conchia le corbel du froumage' (IIe); folio 71c 'C'est le desputement de la mesange et de Renart' (IIc); Branch IId occurs later in the manuscript, but has no rubric. On folio 28a (Martin identifies as V, vv. 289ff.), we read 'Si come Ysengrin s'ala plaindre de .R. a la cort le roi', thus making it Va. This manuscript, then, identifies internally the sections of Branch II connected to Chantecler, the *corbel*, the *mesange*, but not the rape scene by title or reference to Hersent by name.

³¹ Busby, *Codex and Context*, p. 201.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 205.

This may be due to the missing or fragmentary folio 4 (see below description of MS M), but C does clearly mark the court scene, Va, several subsections of Branch I, and Branch VI, 'Le Duel'.

Based on Martin's description, MS D has rubrics that relate to two parts of Branch II, the Chantecler story and Tiecelin, but no rubric for Branch V or Va at all. MS E has no rubrics, only two large initials for Branch II, one at the beginning and later at v. 843, and not even a large initial at V or Va. MSS F, G (see below), and H likewise. MSS I and K have only one large initial for Branch II. MS L has eighteen large initials, but none at Branch II. There are also titles written in black ink. Martin identifies folio 19 as having a large initial, and as being Branch VI, and then later he notes a title at folio 19 'Si vient comment .R. dut Jurer le sairement a la volante Roienel le mastin', thus it is more likely Va. There are also eleven explicits, in black ink, but none of these relates to II or Va.

MS M, a closely related family member of MS C, includes more than forty rubrics. The initial section, folios 1–5, also contains the same branches as MS C. There are two especially interesting rubrics at folio 2a, 'Cist faillent les enfances .R. and conmanche si come il compissa les loviaus', and on folio 5a, 'Ici fenist com .R. compissa les loviaus et fist y cous et commance si com .R. menja le poisson au charretiers'. All the other sections of Branch II are marked also: folio 8c, 'Ci comance de .R. si come il prist Chantecler le coc'; folio 11d, 'Ici fenist si come .R. prist Chantecler et comance de .R. et de Tybert le chat'; folio 94a, 'Ci comence du corbel et de Renart'; folio 95b, 'Ci fenist du corbel et de .R.'; folio 97a, 'Ci faut de prestre Martin et comance de la mesange'; folio 98c, 'Ci fenist le conte de la mesange'. As for Branch Va, it is marked: folio 30b, 'Ci comance d'Ysengrin si come il s'ala plaindre de Renart en la court le roi Noble'; on folio 40b, 'Ci fenist si come dut fere le sairement a .Y.'. MS M is the only manuscript, as far as I know, that has a rubric, written presumably at the time of the creation of the manuscript, that refers to the cuckolding of Ysengrin (folio 5a 'fist y cous').³³

In MS N (Vatican, cod. Regin. 1699, a manuscript that belonged to C. Fauchet and was used by both Le Grand d'Aussy and Méon), there are three large initials at Branch II, Branch II v. 843, and Branch II vv. 23ff., one at Va. There is one red title in the manuscript (Br. XIV), and the ends of some branches are marked in black ink: 'ainsi après la br. II. on lit "Ci fenist li chapitrez comment .R. deoieut tieselin le corbel Et comment il coissu Hersent Sa

³³ I have personally examined only five manuscripts: A, B, C, G, and I; comments on the others are based on descriptions in the major editions.

commere et compisa ses louuiaus”³⁴ but I believe that these explicits are considered later additions. It is interesting that this is only the second instance of a unique descriptive marker for ‘Le Viol’ portion of Branch II, and it is the only one that uses the name Hersent and refers to what Renart did to her (‘coissu’),³⁵ linking it and putting it on the same level as the soiling of the cubs.

Moving from the larger division markers to the small initials, a close examination of MS G reveals sixteen of them on folios 20a–25b that contain Branch II, vv. 1–842, and another one at v. 858 slightly beyond where Branch XV may begin. There is no large initial to indicate the new branch, and II simply ‘slides into’ what Martin divides. The number of small initials in this portion is approximately one every fifty lines, and they do not seem to mark narrative divisions. There are four Q’s for *quant*, several others at adverbials such as *lors* or *la*, and several at the mention of a character by common or proper name. This supports Busby’s observation mentioned above. Later in the manuscript at folio 48, the second portion of Branch II beginning at v. 843 is signalled by a miniature, but there is no large initial, and there are no small ones before folio 50, where we find one at v. 1151. The importance of this is that the beginning of ‘Le Viol’ (v. 1024/25) is not marked. From folio 48 where Branch II begins through folio 51 where v. 1396 (end of the scene) is found, there are seven small initials, again occurring about every fifty lines, two to four per folio in the same sort of distribution, that is, several adverbials and the proper names Renart and Ysengrin. One of these small initials is an E for *elle*, a reference to Hersent, in the famous line that in some manuscripts has her saying, ‘C’est force’. Here it reads ‘Elle li dit qu’il la croullour’ (see note 35). After v. 1396, there is a large initial signalling apparently the beginning of Branch III.

For me, the very small number of markers at the level of large initials, rubrics, titles, or explicits for ‘Le Viol’, and the near silence with regard to Hersent’s name (although abundant references to others parts and characters in Branch II are found), as well as the precious few markers for Va, imply that, for the compilers of the manuscripts, the rape of Hersent may not have seemed all that important. In any event, it was not so serious as to lead immediately to an appearance at court. It was, perhaps, just another peccadillo of Renart. It is also possible that the two scenes, since they rarely appear together, were not written by the same author or at the same time (*pace* Foulet). The first may be simply a retelling

³⁴ *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by Martin, p. ix.

³⁵ A synonym for a sexual act, according to Tilander, but connotation is less clear. Is this ‘foutre’, ‘force’, ‘viol’, or just ‘you’re crushing me’?

of the Ysengrimus material or the folktale/fable material, while the latter was a 'follow-up' by someone very familiar with the law, who imagined for his time and context what would happen if they took a case of rape of a married woman to court. I cannot pursue that argument here, but I have mentioned elsewhere the sophistication of the discussion of fine legal points in that scene, and the style seems very different from the storytelling of Branch II, as they both are from Branch I, 'Le Jugement'. In a sense, my argument is an argument *ex silencio*, which is always dangerous. The silence of the *mise en page* of the manuscript in regard to the rape of Hersent cannot be due to prudery or a tendency to avoid specific references to subsections. If rubrics and titles were used to indicate the 'hot' spots, or to entice the reader into reading something for moral value, the conclusion must be that Hersent's rape did not qualify on either count. If they are used to indicate the well-known tales, then in a popularity contest it also comes out far behind Brun's being trapped in the honey tree. Either way, we have to reconsider the reactions of a contemporary 'courtly' male academic community that has tried to understand, somewhat apologetically, this scene and exaggerated its importance. Likewise, the 'feminist' outcry, as legitimate as it is in many respects, is overstated. It may be much closer to the truth to say that for the compilers of the manuscripts, the story was not that remarkable.

REYNAERT THE FOX: EVIL, COMIC, OR BOTH?¹

Paul Wackers

V*an den vos Reynaerde* is nowadays the most widely known story in Middle Dutch.² Its literary qualities are undisputed. This high appreciation is a constant factor in the text's modern history. Ever since Jacob Grimm praised it as one of the best European animal epics,³ *Van den vos Reynaerde* has been considered as an absolute masterpiece, perhaps the best literary work ever written in Dutch. The first-generation scholars studying this medieval text (Jan Frans Willems, Constant Serrure, Willem Jonckbloet, etc.) saw the main protagonist of this epic, Reynaert the fox, as a positive character. Their praise shows some nationalistic traits: Reynaert represents according to them all the good properties of the inhabitants of the Low Countries.⁴ He loves his freedom, fights

¹ This is the first article in English by my hand in more than a decade that has not been corrected by Brian Levy, which is a good reason to thank him here posthumously for his sustained expertise and friendship during the years that we have collaborated. I am also grateful to Alan Hindley and Adrian Tudor who assisted me on this occasion.

² For an edition of the text see *Reynaert in tweevoud*, vol. 1: *Van den vos Reynaerde*, ed. by André Bouwman and Bart Besamusca (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2002). For a verse translation of the text, see *Reynard the Fox and Other Mediaeval Netherlands Secular Literature*, ed. by Eric Colledge (Leyden: Sijthoff; London: Heinemann; New York: London House and Maxwell, 1967). For a summary and an overview of the text's place in the European tradition, see the lemma 'Reynard the fox' in *A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes: Characters in Medieval Narrative Traditions and their Afterlife in Literature, Theatre and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Willem Pieter Gerritsen and Anthony G. van Melle, trans. from the Dutch by Tanis Guest (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998), pp. 211–19.

³ Jacob Grimm, *Reinhart Fuchs* (Berlin, 1834; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1974).

⁴ This is understandable for Flemish scholars such as Jan Frans Willems and Constant Serrure because they studied Flemish medieval literature as part of their attempts to make

against tyranny and abuse of power, is a good father and husband, uses his wit as a weapon and in this aspect he represents 'modern man' (Jonckbloet). This may seem a bit strange because Reynaert commits treason in the tale; he is also a murderer, perhaps a rapist but in any case an adulterer, and a disloyal servant of the king. This conduct of Reynaert, however, was explained as a reaction to prior aggression by his enemies or glossed over as (minor) shortcomings in a conduct that — as a whole — nevertheless could be seen as positive.

When one analyses the interpretations of separate scholars in detail one finds of course different accents and variations, but this positive image of Reynaert may be found in Dutch scholarship until the eighties of the last century. Then there came a fundamental change. This change was part of a larger shift in Middle Dutch scholarship. In this period there was a growing tendency to study Middle Dutch texts not as timeless literary creations but as historical phenomena.⁵ Mostly this led to reconstructions of the original public of texts, or of their social function. For the study of *Van den vos Reynaerde* this general development had two effects: attention was drawn to the public of the text, and the character of Reynaert himself was studied anew.⁶ Until the eighties most scholars had assumed that *Van den vos Reynaerde* was written for a bourgeois public, more specifically the patricians in the main Flemish towns. They saw the text as a satirical comment on the deficits of nobility, clergy, and peasants from the perspective of townsfolk and as a literary evocation of the fall of the feudal system. In the eighties scholars argued that *Van den vos Reynaerde* had many links with

Flemish equal to French, the language of the leading circles in the whole of Belgium in the nineteenth century. For Netherlandic scholars such as Willem Jonckbloet it is strange because he always makes a clear distinction between the Netherlands and Flanders, but in this case sees the fictional hero of a Flemish epic as the archetypical representation of the positive qualities of Netherlandic burghers. Jonckbloet's stressing of the importance of Reynaert's fight for freedom may be related to the 80 years war in which Holland became independent of Spain, but perhaps a 'pangermanic' point of view is a more plausible explanation for his opinions. In any case Grimm's influence is clearly discernible in all early studies of *Van den vos Reynaerde* in the Low Countries. This subject deserves a study of its own.

⁵ See for instance the articles in *Medieval Dutch Literature in its European Context*, ed. by Erik Kooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁶ Cf. Frits Pieter van Oostrom, *Reinaert primair: Over het geïntendeerde publiek en de oorspronkelijke functie van 'Van den vos Reynaerde'* (Utrecht: HES, 1983). Reprinted, without the appendices, in Hans van Dijk and Paul Wackers, *Pade crom ende menichfoude: Het 'Reynaert'-onderzoek in de tweede helft van de twintigste eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999), pp. 197–213.

courtly literature.⁷ Its structure reflects that of Arthurian romances (starting at court, ending with a renewed peace between all members of the court); its themes reflect that of courtly literature, and the values it presents are also courtly. From a courtly point of view Reynaert is a bad character. He is an unfaithful vassal, an unfaithful lover, and corrupts the court's justice. And this negative view of Reynaert's character is corroborated by other medieval testimonies. Van Oostrom collected an anthology of remarks about Reynaert in Middle Dutch literature and showed that most often the quotations came from courtly texts and always gave a negative verdict on Reynaert.⁸ In my thesis I studied the image of the fox in the medieval intellectual tradition (mainly via Latin texts), and I also concluded that medieval texts almost always consider a fox as a negative character.⁹ This all led to an interpretation of Reynard as a negative character: a slyboots, a misuser of his intellect and verbal ingenuity to bring himself gain and his enemies loss. Because in biblical exegesis and in the *Physiologus*/bestiary tradition the fox stands allegorically for the devil, some scholars see Reynaert even as the devil or as Evil incarnate.¹⁰ In their view the story of *Van den vos Reynaerde* shows how Nobel's courtly society breaks down because of Reynaert's evil manipulations of the weaknesses and the sins of the animals at court. In general terms one can say that during the last decades scholarship on *Van den vos Reynaerde* has been concentrating on the meaning, on the moral message of the text.

These convictions, with variations, hold sway until the present day. There is one exception however. In 1996 the Gent scholar Jo Reynaert (*nomen est omen*) criticized the 'new' opinion on Reynaert.¹¹ He argued that *Van den vos Reynaerde*

⁷ André Bouwman, *Reinaert en Renart: het dierenepos 'Van den vos Reynaerde' vergeleken met de Oudfranse 'Roman de Renart'*, 2 vols (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1991), 1, esp. pp. 261–74. Rik van Daele, *Ruimte en naamgeving in 'Van den vos Reynaerde'* (Gent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 1994), passim.

⁸ Van Oostrom, *Reinaert primair*.

⁹ Paul Wackers. *De waarheid als leugen: Een interpretatie van Reynaerts historie* (Utrecht: HES, 1986), chapter 2. Cf. also Paul Wackers, 'The Image of the Fox in Middle Dutch Literature', in *The Fox and Other Animals*, special volume of *Reinardus* (1993), 181–98. Reprinted in Van Dijk and Wackers, *Pade crom ende menichfoude*, pp. 251–66.

¹⁰ For instance, Van Daele, *Ruimte en naamgeving*, pp. 533–42. *Van den vos Reynaerde: Het Comburgse handschrift*, ed. by Jozef Janssens and others (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1991), pp. 158–62.

¹¹ Joris Reynaert, 'Botsaerts verbijstering: Over de interpretatie van "Van den vos Reynaerde"', *Spiegel der letteren*, 38 (1996), 44–61. Reprinted in Van Dijk and Wackers, *Pade crom ende menichfoude*, pp. 267–83.

is an animal epic and as such belongs to a genre *sui generis*. This implies according to him that the intertextual links with courtly texts are not all automatically valid and that intertextual relations between *Van den vos Reynaerde* and courtly literature do not necessarily cause the first text to be anticourtly. After all, creating a contrast is not the same as formulating criticism. The animal epic, being a genre *sui generis*, implies also that the negative judgements on foxes and on Reynaert in biblical exegesis, bestiaria, moral tracts, etc. are not necessarily relevant for the interpretation of Reynaert's character in *Van den vos Reynaerde*. And lastly, Jo Reynaert suggests that Reynardian scholarship has been looking too much for a coherent meaning in the text. He suggests that *Van den vos Reynaerde* could have been told for amusement, to give the audience something to think about, without however restricting it to a precise sombre moral message. Partly this discussion is specific for the study of Middle Dutch literature and has as such only a restricted relevance, but questions on the function and the meaning of animal literature and on the possible interrelationships between moral message and comic aspects of texts are general subjects which deserve the attention of scholars of medieval literature. So in this essay I will try to reflect anew on some elements from this discussion within the Low Countries with the wider perspective in mind.¹² Particular attention will be given to the character of Reynaert. Firstly I will discuss how bad he can be and then the ways in which the author characterizes the animals and presents the action to his public. The last part of this essay discusses the possible attitudes of the public towards story and characters.

As already stated, some scholars suggest that Reynaert is an image of Evil incarnate or of the devil. Although their reasoning is not always explicit, it is clear that this interpretation is based on the fact that the allegorical meaning of the fox in biblical exegesis or in the *bestiaria* is the devil. In the visual arts too there is often a link between fox and devil.¹³ The hypothesis that if a fox means the devil in

¹² I am influenced by Reynaert, 'Botsaerts verbijstering', but do not follow his reasoning completely. My arguments reveal some analogies with Jozef Janssens, 'Reinaerts felheid: Nog maar eens over de interpretatie van *Van den vos Reynaerde*', *Tiecelijn*, 14 (2001), 122–34. The type of problems to be discussed here was also the subject of my 'Al ist som boert . . . Methodological Reflections on the Study of Comedy in Animal Stories', *Reinardus*, 3 (1990), 199–211. Although much of what was stated there seems still valid to me, I have tried to be less restricted and less theoretical (or 'bookish') this time.

¹³ See for instance the illustrations in *Van den vos Reynaerde: Het Comburgse handschrift*, ed. by Jozef Janssens and others, and Janssens, 'Reinaerts felheid', pp. 129–31.

some medieval genres and contexts he has the same meaning in other medieval testimonies seems reasonable. But is it? In medieval thought the allegorical meaning of the world and of the Bible is seen as created by God himself;¹⁴ it is not the result of human intellectual activities. The following, famous, quotation by Hugo of St Victor makes this distinction clearly:

Universus enim mundus iste sensibilis quasi quidam liber est scriptus digito Dei, hoc est virtute divina creatus, et singulae creaturae quasi figurae quaedam sunt non humano placito inventae, sed divino arbitro institutae ad manifestandam invisibilem Dei sapientiam.¹⁵

Reynaert is not a real fox, created by God. He is a fictional character invented by Willem, a human author. So his meaning does not depend on the God-given structure of the world but is constructed by a human mind. It is based on *humanum placitum*. To see whether this distinction has consequences for the interpretation of Reynaert it is necessary to study medieval ideas about fiction.¹⁶ This is not the place to discuss this theme fully, so a short summary must suffice. In medieval theory a fictional story consists of an untrue 'outer' story that is the vehicle for the author to present a true meaning to his public. This technique to present truth indirectly may be used to make difficult matters easier to understand or to mix learning with amusement. Both strategies make a text more efficient as a learning instrument. There are no medieval discussions about the subjects a fictional story may or may not handle, but when the real subject of fictional stories, especially fables, is mentioned explicitly this subject is always

¹⁴ As an introduction to this way of thinking, see Johan Chydenius, *The Theory of Medieval Symbolism* (Helsingfors: Northern Antiquarian Bookstore, 1960). Friedrich Ohly, 'Vom geistigen Sinn des Wortes im Mittelalter', in Ohly, *Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), pp. 1–31.

¹⁵ Hugo of St Victor, *Eruditionis didascalicae*, VII, IV, in *Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latinae*, ed. by Jacques Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Parisiis, 1844–90), 176, col. 814. 'The whole visible world is as a book, written by God's finger, i.e. created by divine power and the individual creatures must be seen as allegories (*figurae*) which are not invented by human discretion but instituted by the divine will to reveal God's invisible wisdom.'

¹⁶ See Paul Wackers, 'Die mittelalterliche Tiergeschichte: *Satira* oder *Fabula*', in *Epopée animale, fable, fabliau: Actes du IV^e Colloque de la Société Internationale Renardienne. Evreux, 7–11 septembre 1981*, ed. by Gabriel Bianciotto and Michel Salvat (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), pp. 687–99. Paul Wackers, 'Mutorum animalium conloquium, or Why Do Animals Speak?', *Reinardus*, 1 (1988), 163–74. *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c.1100–c.1375: The Commentary Tradition*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Alexander Scott with the assistance of David Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 47–50, 113–64.

indicated as 'human morals' or 'human behaviour'. Especially this last element seems important to me. It suggests — I think — that at least medieval theoretical authors assume that authors of fictional stories, especially fables and animal stories, should restrict their topics to the human level. When God or the devil is the subject of a text the reasoning or the tale should be based on reality and/or revelation. If this is true and if the theoretical statements we have left reflect a more generally felt attitude, it is improbable that the author of *Van den vos Reynaerde* wanted to link his main character with the devil. It is more plausible that he saw Reynaert as the representation of a specific type of humans or of human behaviour.

There is another argument against interpreting Reynaert as a completely negative character. When one studies the fox in the Middle Dutch fable tradition one gets ambiguous results.¹⁷ The fox is always linked to shrewdness, but sometimes his behaviour is seen as positive (he behaves wisely, he solves a problem, he helps himself or some other animal, etc.), sometimes as negative (he is a self-satisfied fool, he cheats someone, he gains something by flattering, etc.). The action in fables is very important and actually determines the character of the protagonists. It seems at least as reasonable to compare *Van den vos Reynaerde* with fables as with bestiaries and Bible exegesis. And we will see below that there are reasons to consider Reynaert in *Van den vos Reynaerde* as an ambiguous character whose behaviour is more determined by the action the author wants to present than by a wish to construct a coherent 'personality' of the fox.

Lastly there is a specific scene in the story that corroborates my line of reasoning and also is relevant regarding Reynaert's comic side.¹⁸ This is the moment that Reynaert takes his leave from the king and queen. He is then attired with four (!) shoes, made out of the paws of the wolves, and with a pilgrim's bag made from a piece of Bruun the bear's skin. The author comments on Reynaert's appearance:

Mi dinct ende ic wane des,
Dat niemant so onspelic es
Tusschen Pollanen ende Scouden,
Die hem van lachene hadde onthouden
Dor rauwe die hem mochte ghescien,

¹⁷ Cf. Wackers, 'Image of the Fox', pp. 189–93.

¹⁸ The importance of this scene has been stressed before. See Reynaert, 'Botsaert's verbijstering' (*Pade crom ende menichfoude*, p. 273) and *Reynaert in tweevoud*, vol. 1, ed. by Bouwman and Besamusca, p. 183.

Hadde hi Reynaerde doe ghesien.
 Hoe wonderlic hi henen ghinc
 Ende hoe ghemackelic dat hem hinc
 Scaerpe ende palster omme den hals
 Ende die scoen als ende als
 Die hi drouch an zine been
 Ghebonden, sodat hi sceen
 Een peelgrijn licht ghenouch.¹⁹

In the first place it is clear that the author wants to stress here that this pilgrim-fox is a comical figure. Everyone seeing him will laugh, even the greatest miser. So at this moment of triumph for the fox (he will leave the court in a few moments after victory over all his enemies) he is presented as someone/something ridiculous. This is mainly done by stressing that the fox is not a real pilgrim. He is a strangely attired fox. This point is made by mentioning the fact that this pilgrim is wearing four shoes as well as by the verbal indications of semblance (*ghemackelic, sceen Een peelgrijn licht ghenouch*). The effect of this passage is that the reader of the text becomes keenly aware that this 'hero' is an animal, and probably that he is 'just an animal'. In my view this passage shows that author and public feel superior to Reynaert. He may be victorious in the reality of the story but nevertheless he stands on a lower level than they do. He *looks* like a pilgrim but he is not able to *be* one because he is not a human being. This implies probably also that he cannot be the devil. The devil is ultimately dangerous and no laughing stock.

When one looks more closely at the story there are many more occasions where it seems as if the public should feel itself superior to all the animal characters including Reynaert, or at least is able to do so. To illustrate this let us look more closely at the scene in which Reynaert brings Bruun the bear to the tree in which the honey is supposed to be, but in which in reality he hopes to trap the bear (vv. 644–83).

The author first sketches the situation. A felled tree lies on the property of the carpenter Lamfreit. The process of splitting it has begun and there are two wedges in it. Reynaert tells the bear that the honey is in the crack in the tree and

¹⁹ *Van den vos Reynaerde*, vv. 3016–28, in *Reynaert in tweevoud*, vol. 1, ed. by Bouwman and Besamusca, p. 149. 'I think that there is nobody so grouchy between Poland and Schouwen that he would not have laughed because of his misery, when he would have seen Reynaert at that moment. How strangely he walked and how fitting he wore the pilgrim's bag around his neck and all the shoes bound at his legs, so that he effortlessly seemed a pilgrim.'

then warns him: 'Even if you like the honey, be careful and do not eat too much of it; it would be to my dishonour if you had some misfortune.' Bruun is unimpressed. 'Do not fear, Reynaert. I am not stupid. Moderation is at all times good.'²⁰ After this delay the bear puts his head and his forepaws in the crack, Reynaert removes the wedges, and the bear is caught. In the 'standard interpretation' Reynaert is described here as a malicious seducer who traps the bear by making use of his voraciousness. It is stated also that Reynaert plays an active role in the bear's entrapment: he removes the wedges. This is, however, an incomplete analysis. It is remarkable also that Reynaert warns the bear. The main reason for this warning is of course to create suspense. The public expects an entrapment of the bear because of a number of announcements by the author.²¹ Reynaert's warning delays this inevitable outcome. But it *is* a warning. Bruun could have paid attention and could have been more cautious. That he does not and cites a wise proverb without living up to it makes him more stupid and more negative. But another effect is that the public may feel itself superior to both animals. It may think: 'I would not have behaved as stupidly as Bruun', but also: 'Reynaert would not have duped me. I would have seen through his ruse.' One of the functions of the narratorial announcements of Reynaert's betrayal is to support this feeling of superiority.

In the dialogue between fox and bear that leads to the scene we have just analysed, we see a comparable pattern.²² Reynaert mentions in this dialogue that he would have gone to Nobel's court already if he had not suffered from stomach-ache caused by an unknown food. Asked by Bruun what he ate, Reynaert

²⁰ See on the context of this famous proverb, Bart Besamusca, 'Bruun's Wisdom: Moderation in Middle Dutch Literature', in *'Por le soie amisté': Essays in Honor of Norris J. Lacy*, ed. by Keith Busby and Catherine M. Jones (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 1–14.

²¹ See vv. 624–26, 638, 643. On this type of narratorial intervention, see Bart Besamusca, 'Rewriting the *Roman de Renart*: The Middle Dutch Beast Epic *Van den vos Reynaerde*', in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition. Proceedings of the Symposium Held at the Institute for Research in Humanities, October 5–7 1995, The University of Wisconsin*, ed. by Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 387–404 (pp. 399–402). Cf. also the remarks on the narratorial techniques in *Renart Teinturier/Jongleur* in Kenneth Varty, 'Sur le Comique du *Roman de Renart*: des premières branches à *Renart et le vilain Liétart*', in *Le Goupil et le Paysan*, ed. by Jean Dufournet (Paris: Champion, 1990), pp. 167–99 (pp. 186–87).

²² Vv. 524–613. For a full analysis of this dialogue, see Paul Wackers, 'Words and Deeds in the Middle Dutch Reynaert Stories', in *Medieval Dutch Literature in its European Context*, ed. by Kooper, pp. 131–47 (pp. 133–36). Cf. also the remarks in Varty, 'Sur le Comique du *Roman de Renart*', pp. 179–83.

answers that it was bad stuff (*crancke have*, v. 563) because poor people have to eat what they have, not what they like. But then he specifies his food as good fresh honeycombs (v. 568). After the mention of honey Bruun wishes only one thing: to eat it, and he promises Reynaert everything he wants in exchange for it. We see here again some retardation (in the dialogue as a whole this technique is used a couple of times), and again a warning by Reynaert but now an implicit one. Food cannot be bad and good and fresh at the same time. That Bruun does not detect this discrepancy makes him more negative, and when the public does see it, the implication is that they feel superior to Reynaert because he was not able to dupe them. Moreover the author has given the public a warning before (vv. 542–46) to ensure that they would not be duped by Reynaert.

Both scenes and the way they are told create several effects at once. They both consist, in the main, of the animals' own words. These words give the public an image of the 'mind' of the bear and the fox. This is livelier and works more convincingly than simple narratorial statements would have done. The dialogues show Bruun's weaknesses and Reynaert's bad intentions. At the same time the dialogues, combined with the introductory and concluding words by the author, make it possible for the public to feel superior to both animals.

I think this last aspect is an important element in the comical effect of the story. Fox and bear promise each other loyalty. Because medieval society had fewer structural safety-nets (government, police, insurance, etc.) than ours, this type of personal promise was in fact the basis for social security and personal safety. Therefore they were considered as very important, almost sacrosanct. Here, however, the reason for such a bond is fairly trivial (i.e. greed) and one of the parties does not mean to keep its promise. In reality this would be considered as very wrong. But because the situation shows us two (fictional) animals, this negative aspect is reduced. The public may concentrate on the 'abstract' aspect of the situation and reject the false way in which oaths are handled here. It may also give more attention to the protagonists and their 'crude' motivations. It is in this way that it is able to see the comic aspects of the situation.

My reasoning until now may be summarized as follows: the author of *Van den vos Reynaerde* presents his story in such a way that the public has a choice. The scenes in his tale have a double aspect. On the one hand they often handle serious matters; they present deeds that in reality would be considered as wrong. On the other hand these deeds are carried out by (fictional) animals. This creates a distance from reality, makes the public feel superior, and is one of the aspects that make the comic effects possible.

These statements also hold true for Reynaert. His deeds are negative. He is an oathbreaker, a felon, a rapist, etc. Many of his misdeeds he confesses to

Grimbeert, his nephew, or to Ermeline, his wife (vv. 1453–1655, 3139–99), and when he does this he seems proud of them. And the author often describes Reynaert as *fel*. This is a negative word, meaning ‘cruel’, ‘nasty’, ‘dangerous’, ‘aggressive’, etc. In this way the author himself invokes in the public’s mind the fox’s true nature.²³ So there is no reason to see him as (even slightly) positive. As Bouwman and Besamusca phrase it admirably, *Van den vos Reynaerde* deals with animals which are bad and stupid and with one animal that is bad and cunning.²⁴ On the other hand the fox’s victims deserve what they get and actively support their ruin. Take Bruun again as an example: Reynaert lures him into the tree and the fox removes the wedges but the bear himself cannot wait to put his head and his front paws into the crack. If there is guilt, both have a part in it. And besides, Reynaert’s role is as fixed as that of his victims. They must be greedy, egotistical, and stupid and therefore be duped. Reynaert must be sly and cunning and so be the duper. The author manipulates all his characters. He tells his tale in such a way that every part of the story has the same outcome, but he varies the lead-up to this outcome continually. He also presents his characters regularly as animals and not as the equals of his public. Hence it is possible to admire Reynaert’s ruses but impossible to see him as a model that one should seriously follow.

We thus have here a story without a real hero and with an ambiguous content. If one wants, it is possible to find a serious meaning in it but this is not necessary. One may also choose to concentrate on the surface, enjoy the tale, and keep one’s distance from the deeper layers. Lastly, it is possible that some may react in both ways to the story (either at the same time or at different moments).

Until now I have discussed the way in which the author of *Van den vos Reynaerde* makes his audience feel superior to the animal characters in his narrative. I think he also tries to create detachment in his public. This may sound perhaps a bit strange because the story of *Van den vos Reynaerde* is admirably whole, and every action in the narrative leads to the next. Following the storyline creates involvement because one wants to know how it will end. Nevertheless there are quite some moments when the author creates distance from his story. The scene I cited earlier, where Reynaert was described as a ridiculous pilgrim, is such a

²³ This interpretation of *fel* is fairly standard. Reynaert, ‘Botsaerts verbijstering’ (*Pade crom ende menichfoude*, pp. 279–80) interprets the use of the word *fel* as one of the narratorial techniques used to denote Reynaert’s ruses.

²⁴ *Reynaert in tweevoud*, vol. 1, ed. by Bouwman and Besamusca, p. 187.

moment. Hearing this you realize that you are listening to a fictional story about someone who does not exist. This not only creates superior feelings but also makes it possible to 'judge' the characters and the events in the story from a distance. And this, on its turn, is necessary for the public to be able to choose whether to laugh about the story or become angry, or depressed, etc.

In the case of Reynaert as a false pilgrim this detachment is created by presenting anthropomorphic and animal traits together. This is a technique the author of *Van den vos Reynaerde* uses often. But it is not the only way to create distance between audience and story. A short exploration of other European animal epics will illustrate this. Another way to do the same is to alternate 'animal-like' episodes with 'human-like' ones. This happens, for instance, often in the early branches of the *Roman de Renart*.²⁵ A striking example is the end of the section about Renart raping the she-wolf after she got stuck in the entrance to his den in Branches II–Va. After Renart has disappeared, Ysengrin tries to free his wife and then the animal aspects are highlighted: he tries to tug her out of her hole by her tail; the pain causes her to urinate and defecate; he scratches soil from around her to enlarge the hole; and finally he releases her by pulling her by the tail yet again. The contrasting 'human' section which follows immediately begins with the lord constable pouring vulgar abuse on his wife. To this she replies in a dignified manner, insisting that she has been the victim of rape. The whole conversation which follows could have been spoken by human beings.²⁶

Another technique to link animals with distinct human traits is comparison. This is a technique often used by the author of the *Ysengrimus*. As usual in the European animal tradition he characterizes his wolf, Ysengrimus, by his greed, but in the *Ysengrimus* this greed 'is no animal greed pure and simple; it is specifically conceived as the cupidity characteristic of a monk. The wolf himself carefully explains this to the fox at the beginning of the fishing episode in Book I. Since he became a monk, he says, his greed has doubled, for the cupidity of a monk has been added to that of a wolf. A wolf, when he is full, says "enough", but a monk still says "that is not much" (I 639–44).'²⁷ This type of comparison points, of course, to the satirical dimensions of the text, but that a wolf speaks these words makes it clear also that he is not a wolf but a fictional character.

²⁵ Kenneth Varty, 'Back to the Beginning of the *Romans de Renart*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 29 (1985), 44–72, esp. pp. 47–49.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁷ *Ysengrimus*, ed. and trans. by Jill Mann (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 10.

The last technique I want to mention is imagery. A clear example of this may be found in the Tibert-episode in Branch II. The narrator of this section presents fox and cat to us sometimes as animals (i.e. the cat chasing his own tail) and sometimes as knights on horseback (i.e. using spurs). All the references to horsemanship, however, must be seen as imagery; otherwise the whole plot in which both animals try to lure the other into a trap becomes impossible.²⁸ So here there is no real anthropomorphism, rather a tale about two characters who behave like animals, but with an overlay of images based on a specific human action, that is, riding on horseback.

I make this 'excursion' into other narratives because I believe that this type of literary technique is very important. It is precisely this mix of animal and human aspects which distinguishes the animal epic as a genre and explains the way animal epics influence the mind of their audience. There are many studies on these techniques but, as far as I know, they are always restricted to narratives in one language.²⁹ It seems important to me to study the techniques in a broader, multilingual perspective. I think this will help us better to understand the medieval animal epic as a European phenomenon.

For the moment, however, I want to come back to my starting point: the creation of distance and detachment in the public. I have argued that this is an inevitable side effect of the mixing of human and animal traits. Next to that, however, there is another reason for the public's detachment: this allows them to enjoy the violent and sadistic scenes that many animal epics contain. Every reader of the *Ysengrimus* or the *Roman de Renart* will find it easy to bring these type of scenes to mind, but let me give again some examples from *Van den vos Reynaerde*, concentrating on Reynaert's role:³⁰ the episode of Bruun in the tree, for instance. Bruun is maltreated and wounded by peasants and loses his scalp,

²⁸ Varty, 'Back to the Beginning of the *Romans de Renart*', pp. 59–60.

²⁹ For an overview, see for instance Micheline de Combarieu du Gres and Jean Subrenat, *Le Roman de Renart: Index des thèmes et des personnages* (Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1987) and Kenneth Varty, *The Roman de Renart: A Guide to Scholarly Work* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998).

³⁰ *Van den vos Reynaerde* is a fitting text to demonstrate these general traits. André Bouwman, for instance, has argued that the conflict in *Van den vos Reynaerde* has been enlarged and sharpened compared to the source, Branch I. Cf. Bouwman, *Reinaert en Renart*, pp. 409–17; André Bouwman, 'Van den vos Reynaerde and Branch I of the *Roman de Renart*: Tradition and Originality in a Middle Dutch Beast Epic', *Neophilologus*, 76 (1992), 482–501 (pp. 495–97).

one ear, and the skin of his forepaws. He loses a lot of blood and is so badly wounded that he is unable to walk, finding it necessary to roll back to Nobel's court. Before he starts this humiliating journey Reynaert meets him and jibes at him, interpreting his wounds as signs of the bear's priestly status (vv. 937–51). Later in the story Bruun loses a piece of skin from one of his flanks and the wolf and his wife both lose the skin of two of their paws in order to prepare a pilgrim's bag and shoes for Reynaert. Again this maltreatment is mixed with mockery (vv. 2841–2912). Reynaert says to the she-wolf that he is distressed because of her distress, but also that it makes him happy. Because of her pain she will receive part of the spiritual rewards Reynaert himself will win on his pilgrimage wearing her shoes. And this will be good for her salvation.

Presented in such a way, the behaviour of Reynaert seems to support the negative view on his character. After all, sneering and insulting are not to be considered good conduct, especially when directed to someone who is wounded and in pain. But when the ingenuity of Reynaert's remarks, the blatant irreality of his interpretations or presentations of what has happened, and the vivid, brilliant style of his words are considered, we must conclude that the author of *Van den vos Reynaerde* meant his public to see these scenes as comic. However, this is only possible by detachment. When someone identifies himself with the victim of such a treatment, or when we imagine ourselves undergoing it, there is nothing comical in the situation. The scenes only have a comic effect when the public gloats about the fate of the victim, and this gloating necessarily implies emotional detachment.³¹ However, what is the cause of this detachment? I have argued that the cause is the audience's feeling of superiority. Jill Mann, on the other hand, has linked the violence in the *Ysengrimus* to the grotesque imagery which has been characterized by Mikhail Bakhtin as part of the medieval carnivalesque tradition.³² In this tradition the body is exaggerated and distorted, and parts of the body may be removed and sometimes gain a life of their own. If I understand her rightly, she believes that the grotesque effects dominate over feelings of pity or abhorrence. Kenneth Varty has related the violence in branches of the *Roman de Renart* to cartoons and the incapacity of children to understand the feelings of others, especially inimical others.³³ He suggests that the psychology of medieval man resembled in some elements that of modern

³¹ Cf. the comments in Varty, 'Sur le Comique du *Roman de Renart*', pp. 174–75, 187. Reynaert, 'Botsaert's verbijstering' (*Pade crom ende menichfoude*, pp. 273–74).

³² *Ysengrimus*, ed. and trans. by Mann, p. 29–37.

³³ Varty, 'Sur le Comique du *Roman de Renart*'.

children.³⁴ We see here two types of explanation in different forms: one is psychological — namely when I speak of feelings of superiority and when Varty speaks of the restrictedness of children's feelings — and the other is technical, or literary — namely when Jill Mann speaks about grotesque imagery and Varty uses the comparison between the *Roman de Renart* and the cartoon world. It is clear that psychology and literary technique are linked in some way, but I would not dare to say whether one of these explanations is better or more fundamental than the other, or whether one of these explains the situation in one text and the other in another text. In my opinion, the European animal epics remain an ambiguous genre, this despite all the research and investigations undertaken to this point.

Of course, this is not really strange. The only way to give meaning to tales with animal protagonists is to link them with the human world. And if an author has not stated his intentions clearly and explicitly, then this can be done in a number of ways. This is probably a major reason for the difficulties modern scholars have when interpreting medieval animal epics and for the dissenting views regarding the meaning(s) of these epics; it is probably also the explanation for the continuing popularity enjoyed by this genre in modern times. These tales present us not only with intellectual puzzles but also with carnival mirrors: they offer distorted views of human behaviour. When we accept the rules of these mirrors, we can still see in them the failings and stupidities of other people; and also, if we are honest, the comic side of the evil within us all.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

‘F***ING PEASANTS’: PRESENCE, STATUS,
AND SEXUALITY IN *RENART ET BERTOT*

James Simpson

ARTHUR: Old Woman!

DENNIS: Man!

ARTHUR: Man. Sorry. What knight lives in that castle over there?

DENNIS: I’m 37.

ARTHUR: What?

DENNIS: I’m 37. I’m not old.

ARTHUR: Well, I can’t just call you ‘man’.

DENNIS: You could say ‘Dennis’.

ARTHUR: I didn’t know you were called Dennis.

DENNIS: Well, you didn’t bother to find out, did you?

ARTHUR: I did say sorry about the ‘old woman’, but from behind you looked...

DENNIS: What I object to is that you automatically treat me like an inferior. [. . .]

OTHER PEASANT: Dennis! There’s some lovely filth down here.¹

My subject here stands somewhat at odds with the personality of the dedicatee of this volume, although — alas! — now and hereafter all too absent, in his time such a vibrantly unmistakable and enlivening presence at so many conferences I have attended. The focus of this essay is the paradox of a body of texts that remind us that one of the most remarkable things

¹ *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, dir. by Terry Jones and Terry Gilliam (1974).

about comic presence is the extent to which it problematizes the notion of presence in general, given that, as we know from commentators such as Freud, comedy is often as dependent on what is left unsaid (comedy of recognition) or has not been said yet (comedy of anticipation) as what is articulated explicitly. In the same way, the prologue to *Renart et Isengrin dans le puits*, which, having asserted that the tale to follow is comic (line 2), nonetheless delays identifying the hero.² Rather, it offers first a portrait of the audience as prototypes of Baudelaire's 'hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère', and then completes the ensnaring with the collusive revelation: 'C'est de Renart — bien le savez' (line 21). Sometimes there is no need to mention him. Thus, if Renart's most substantial contribution to the satirical traditions of the Middle Ages is his name, sometimes claimed to have rebaptized a species, the *Renart* nonetheless also reminds us that the relation between name and narrative can be elastic to say the least, with no need to accumulate mentions in the manner of the *chansons de geste*, an example being the drumming repetition of Roland's. This elasticity is further reinforced by the fact that Renart functions as a quilting point for a mobile mass of attributes encompassing irreconcilable opposites most strikingly enumerated in Rutebeuf's *Renart le bestourné*: he is alive and dead, human and animal, penitent and sinner. What begins in the bestiary as the feigned death of the fox thus becomes a part of Renart's condition as a satirical figure.

This 'nature that is not one' is also encapsulated in the frequent references to the fox as the subject of demonic possession, at which point we are faced with the conundrum that Renart is most himself when, from a theological point of view, he is precisely *not* himself. Renart's presence thus runs through the narrative as a thread of dissonance, a problem. And, as Jean Scheidegger points out, it is this same paradox at the heart of the fox's nature that makes him a natural focus for medieval anxieties about signification: Renart is the 'art' of 'rien', both the thing and the nothing, present and absent at the same time, the very embodiment of a comic improvisation that can conjure entire worlds from the most

² References to the text of the *Renart* are to the following editions: for *Renart et Bertot* and most other branches, *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. and trans. by Jean Dufournet and Andrée Méline, 2 vols (Paris: Flammarion, 1985). Translations are taken from *The Romance of Reynard the Fox*, trans. by D. D. R. Owen, World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Branches are referred to according to the titles suggested by Kenneth Varty: 'De l'appellation des branches et des contes des *Romans de Renart*', in *A la recherche du 'Roman de Renart'*, ed. by Kenneth Varty, 2 vols (New Alyth, Perthshire: Lochee, 1988–91), 1 (1988), 7–12.

minimal of props, ensnaring the unwary in a world of shadows.³ The branches of the *Renart* thus seem to explore the extent to which Renart's name not only stamps itself on the corpus — by dint of his prominent role in events — but also haunts it.

The quality of the *Renart*'s comedy can be judged by the neatness with which the shadowiness of Renart's presence is accounted for and used. At the simplest level, the paradox of the fox's identity is most neatly encapsulated in the contrast between his considerable powers and deficient physical means. Such is the case in *Renart jongleur*, a coda to *Le Jugement de Renart* in which the fox in his new-found disguise is able to move from lamenting the disadvantage implied in the contrast between himself half-starved and Isengrin 'fors et cras' (vv. 2331–32) to basking in his own notoriety in a conversation that does not even need to mention him by name (vv. 2418–42). Renart's spectral presence in this sequence of branches as 'Public Enemy No. 1' provides a convenient aetiology for how comic presence piggy-backs on the appeals to divine presence subtending other kinds of discourse. Prayers, oaths, and ordeals, all staples of the *Renart*'s comic repertoire, reflect the conceit of an immanent divine presence that shapes the literary universe of the *chanson de geste*, a counterfeiting that also informs the Old French beast epic's comic mirroring and critique of the Capetian project to extend the fiction of a royal presence into the remotest corners of the kingdom. Noble's judicial utterances represent a massive mobilization of discursive presence intended to tame or destroy the fox, to write his influence out of history.

However, although Noble lays claim to a divinely instituted authority that should guarantee his control of subjects out of the immediate reach of his teeth and claws, the *Renart* seems to set itself as an anti-universe presided over by other spirits than the 'God who never lies' of epic. Such uneasy thoughts subtend episodes such as *Renart jongleur* as the tale mockingly reflects on who precisely answered Renart's prayer to become unrecognizable: God or the 'devils' (line 2258) who lead him to leap through the dyer's window. This reflection on presiding presences continues with Isengrin naming the pagan deity Appolon (vv. 2440–41) as Renart's protector. References of this kind to outside agencies seem to fit with a body of narratives in which the fox himself seems so often to slink along in fear of whom he might meet. Thus, Renart may be the most prominent name associated with the beast epic, but he is nonetheless as likely to be terrorized by its creators as he is to haunt or terrorize himself ('N'est merveille

³ Jean R. Scheidegger, *Le Roman de Renart ou le texte de la dérision* (Geneva: Droz, 1989), pp. 420–21.

s'il se regarde / Qui de totes bestes a garde', vv. 2215–16), with humour often had at his expense instead of others'. By a similar token, the narrative that is my chief subject here, an episode of the *Roman de Renart* known as *Renart et Bertot*, presents a rich and full dramatization of precisely this problem, illustrating how Renart as a presence in language reminds us of all the ways in which language is about absence.⁴ Filled with set-pieces, props, and intimations of shadowy diabolical forces ready to lead the hero astray, the text seems endowed with a life of its own that lets the characters know they are not alone, challenging and contesting the agency of the characters who inhabit it, including the one who gives the work its name.

The *Renart's* reflection on literary and comic presence is also bound up with reflections on material presence as a founding substrate of culture and discourse, and it is this that makes tales such as *Renart et Bertot* such fascinating witnesses to social attitudes, most notably the contempt shown in many Old French texts for the peasantry, attitudes neatly reflected in the scripting of the scene from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* cited above, to which I will return. The branch's exploration of presence also offers insights into the relation between materiality, gender, and social status, casting light on Paul Freedman's suggestive comment that male peasant characters in medieval comic texts commonly exhibit a 'curiously asexual materiality'.⁵ What I will also argue is that *Renart et Bertot* addresses the question of that 'curiosity' by means of the presences and absences that people it, and so makes intriguingly apparent the connections between the challenge to agency and the challenge to gender that is the 'asexuality' of the peasant. This 'sexless' materiality of the peasant, if read against scriptural commentary on the Garden of Eden, a moment presented in the patristic tradition as the birth of ambiguity and irony, appears as a 'presenceless' slime waiting merely to be fecundated, but which has already been made open to that possibility by Bertot's own devilry. In that sense, my reading here is of the scene as a version of narrative of the Temptation but also the Annunciation. In that

⁴ Br. XVI, cf. *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by Ernest Martin, 3 vols (Strasbourg: Trübner; Paris: Leroux, 1882–87). *Renart et Bertot*: Renart goes out to seek food to help his family. After crossing the forest, he enters a farm where he is attacked by the peasant Bertot. Renart retaliates, defeats the farmer, and forces him to do homage, but releases him from his oath in exchange for the farmer's cockerel, who escapes by persuading the fox to sing. This episode is then followed by *Le Partage des proies*.

⁵ Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant*, *Figuræ: Reading Medieval Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 159.

respect, my argument here is that what is not so much present in this narrative is the type of a diabolical temptation that hovers in terms of its own typological associations between violation and seduction: after all, the Annunciation can be seen as an answer to the Temptation and Fall. Now, the theme of diabolical seduction has been well studied in the *Renart*. However, what has perhaps not been explored is the manner in which this particular episode, because of its setting and emphasis on production and language, locates the Fall as a moment inaugurating both a history of social antagonism and the very possibility of comedy.

One of the first signs that other forces might be at work occurs early in the branch, with Renart walking through a *locus amoenus* topos in the opening scene (vv. 44–55) that he takes for ‘the earthly paradise’ (‘paradis terrestrez’, line 46). Renart’s marvelling at the set-piece is also tempered by his comment that it is of little immediate use to him (vv. 53–55). The significance of this detail is to flag up the fact that the subsequent setting of the episode is clearly readable against accounts of the earthly paradise, with Renart cast in the role of Satan and Bertot a sort of Adam. Bertot’s farm is presented in the guise of *loci* such as the orchard that is the site for the ‘Joie de la Cour’ in Chrétien’s *Erec et Enide*, or the Garden in the *Roman de la Rose*, a *hortus deliciarum* of variety, fruitfulness, and beauty:⁶

La dedenz avoit arbuiseaux
De maintes guises, ce sachiez
Qui erent tuit de fruit charchiez.
Molt par estoit biax li reperes. (vv. 108–11)

(Inside the enclosure there were many kinds of small trees, all, you may be sure, laden with fruit. It was a most beautiful place to live.)

However, there is a problem here in that we are far from the prelapsarian idyll of Eden. It is not an invisible wall that prevents the good of the land being shared but rather, more mundanely, Bertot’s meanness (‘de despendre n’avoit cure / En amasser metoit sa cure’, vv. 115–16).

In its punishing of Bertot’s avarice, the *Renart* reflects wider attitudes to the relation between cultivation and profit. As I have commented elsewhere, narratives of agricultural activity before and after the Fall stressed the role of providing for others in sufficiency but were divided over the question of marketable

⁶ On the literary tradition of the garden as found in the *Roman de la Rose* and its afterlife, see Terry Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1979), pp. 89–147.

surplus.⁷ As Jacques le Goff comments, ‘the aim of the medieval economy was human subsistence. It did not go further than this’.⁸ As I have argued, such a view derives in part from patristic commentary on Genesis 3, the Temptation and Fall, after which moment labour becomes a problematic activity.⁹ Ambrose’s commentary is especially revealing, since it draws clear parallels between the fall of Satan, the emergence of ambiguity in language, and the driving role of work in a growth economy:

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light’ and ‘his ministers as ministers of justice’ (2 Corinthians 11, 14–15); he imposes false names on things, calling ‘rashness’ a virtue and ‘avarice’, industry.¹⁰

⁷ J. R. Simpson, *Fantasy, Identity and Misrecognition in Medieval French Narrative* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 193–96.

⁸ Jacques le Goff, *Medieval Civilisation 400–1500*, trans. by Julia Barrow (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 222.

⁹ Augustine returns frequently to Genesis: commentaries are to be found in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus*, the *Confessiones*, *De Genesi ad litteram*, *Quaestiones et Locutiones in Heptateuchum*, and in the *De Civitate Dei*. See Reinhold Grimm, *Paradisus coelestis, Paradisus terrestris: zur Auslegungsgeschichte des Paradieses im Abendland bis um 1200*, Medium Aevum Philologische Studien, 33 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977), pp. 56–57. For the text of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, see *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps by Adolph Rusch of Strassburg, 1480/1481*, introd. by Karlfried Fröhlich and Margaret T. Gibson, 4 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 1, 28. Some of the commentary on Genesis, possibly compiled by Gilbert the Universal, is derived from ‘Strabus’ (= Walafrid Strabo), whose main work consists in an abbreviation of Raban’s commentaries (see Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 57–62), but the majority is from Augustine. On the place of these commentaries in Augustine’s work, see Grimm, *Paradisus coelestis*, pp. 55–71. Grimm describes Augustine’s work as the normative paradigm for medieval commentary on Genesis in the West (p. 55). Ambrose’s work was not used for this section of the Gloss (Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, pp. 226–27).

¹⁰ Ambrose, *Paradise* (ed. by Carl Schenkl, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 32 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1896), pp. 263–336; translation in *St Ambrose: Hexameron, Paradise, Cain and Abel*, trans. by John J. Savage, Fathers of the Church, 42 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1961), pp. 287–356, §73 (p. 351 in edition; for Latin text, see p. 331). On Ambrose, see Grimm, *Paradisus coelestis*, pp. 48–54. The text had some influence: Bede and John the Scot both drew on it for their own commentaries, and although otherwise not widely read in the early Middle Ages, it became more frequently copied and cited in the twelfth century (ibid., p. 49). For a discussion of the theme of labour, see R. Bultot, ‘Les Sources philosophiques païennes de l’opposition entre “naturel” et “artificiel” en milieu chrétien’, in *Le Travail au Moyen Age: une approche interdisciplinaire (actes du colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve, 21–23 mai 1987)*, ed. by Jacqueline Hamasse and Colette Muraille-Sarman, Publications de

Texts such as the *Renart* and the scriptural commentary that echoes its concerns posit the idea of the 'serf' as the original linguistic problem: it was the first thing that did not want to be what it was. In such narratives the peasant was relentlessly cast out of Eden. For medieval commentators, it was at this moment that mankind passed from prelapsarian simplicity to the condition of multiplicity and plurality that defined the world thereafter. In Ambrose's *De Paradiso*, when God comes to seek Adam after he has tasted the fruit, he asks 'Ubi es?': 'What, then, does he mean by "Adam, where are you?"? Does he not mean "in what circumstances are you?" ['in quibus'] rather than "in what place" ['in quo']? This is therefore not a question, but a reproach.'¹¹ From the immediacy of divine speech to Adam before the fall, we move to a language full of irony and ambiguity, from simplicity ('in quo') to diversity ('in quibus').¹² It is this moment that announces the spice of plurality and uncertainty that will trouble man's communication with God after the Fall.

It is at this point that the issue of gender emerges as paramount in the sense that the scene that is played out seems to reflect gendered hierarchies characteristic of spiritual writing. The Fall is the result of a seduction in which Satan's penetration of the Garden foreshadows his beguiling of Eve. Gardens are a recurring motif in images of seduction, penetration, and insemination, with the *hortus conclusus* a common image for the Virgin Mary. As Rupert of Deutz explains in his commentary on the Song of Songs 4. 12, '[Mary] is a closed garden — unlike our gardens, which are all open to someone, at least to the gardener [*hortulanus*] — because she is made fruitful by God alone'.¹³ More negative images drew on

l'Institut d'Etudes Médiévales, 10 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut d'études médiévales, 1990), pp. 101–14.

¹¹ Ambrose, *Paradise*, §70 (p. 348); *De Paradiso* (p. 328). Augustine (*De Genesi ad Litteram*, §34.45) remarks that God's address is reproachful, an analysis repeated in the *Glossa Ordinaria* (1, 28). Bernard also repeats the analysis (see 'Parabola 7: de octo beatitudinibus', in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. by J. Leclercq and H. Rochais, 8 vols (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–74), VIb (1972), 299).

¹² On God's speech to Adam before the Fall, see *De Genesi ad Litteram*, §33.43 (*La Genèse au sens littéral*, ed. by P. Agaësse and A. Solignac, 2 vols, Bibliothèque Augustinienne (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1970), pp. 48–49). The problem of place can then return in later biblical texts such as Psalm 37. 10 (alluded to by François Villon in *Le Testament*, line 292 (Villon, *Oeuvres*, ed. by Jean Dufournet and A. Mary (Paris: Garnier, 1970): 'Son lieu ne connaîtras jamais.' The implication being to think that one has 'a place' is simply foolish pride.

¹³ B. E. Daley, 'The "Closed Garden" and the "Sealed Fountain": Song of Songs 4: 12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary', in *Medieval Gardens: Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium*,

Genesis 3 and the commentaries devoted to it, with the serpent going to the woman first, as emphasized here by Ambrose: ‘machinatus est ut [. . .] Adam per mulierem circumscribere conaretur’.¹⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux uses the scene to reflect on the mechanism of temptation, reducing Adam, Eve, and Eden to an allegory for the individual monk. The serpent enters our thoughts through the ‘ear of our Eve’ (‘paradisum conscientiae [. . .] rependo usque ad auriculum Evae meae’).¹⁵ Openness to seduction is thus glossed as feminine, laying blame on the woman and on that which is not ‘manly’. It is therefore no coincidence that Bertot’s garden is open to the fox, who finds the rot in the palisade (‘trouva un pel par aventure [. . .] usé de pourreture’, vv. 155–56). That rot is the mark of Bertot’s postlapsarian openness to temptation and the fox’s seductive wiles. However, the question remains as to whether Renart is the devil or merely follows in his footsteps: the rot was already there in the measure that peasant avarice had already been presenting itself as industry.

The patristic resonances of this scene thus give us an insight into how the peasant is simultaneously blamed for lacking and shorn of any stable identity, whether in terms of social status or gender. The revenge for this allegedly constant disposition towards social transgression is the questioning of sexual identity: peasants are presented as not human, not men in that they are neither manly nor masters. Crucially, Bertot is quite alone: his wife has gone out to sell the wool she had spun (line 127), while his men are elsewhere (vv. 128–29).

In the absence of the subordinates who would fix him in his gender and status, Bertot’s identity is open to attack. Crucially in this regard Bertot’s transformation does not begin with what he says, but rather with the narratorial voice, with what he is said to do, that makes him the object of an ironic, pseudo-*chanson de geste* description, a mocking promotion that foreshadows the fox’s ruse later:

En sa maison repere atant,
Si prent deus resiaux enfumez
Que maufé li orent donnez,
Et dist que, se Renart l’atent,
Mout iert iriez, s’il ne le prent:
Diable li ont amené. (vv. 196–201)

ed. by E. B. MacDougall (Dumbarton Oaks: Trustees of Harvard University, 1986), pp. 253–78 (p. 264).

¹⁴ Ambrose, *De Paradiso*, p. 312. ‘He contrived to [. . .] circumvent Adam by means of the woman’ (*Paradise*, p. 333).

¹⁵ Bernard, ‘Parabola 7: de octo beatitudinibus’, p. 299.

(He at once returns to the house, takes two smoke-blackened nets given him by devils, and declared that if Renart waits for him, then he will be very angry if he doesn’t catch him, since demons have brought him here.)

By the ironic distancing of the narratorial voice, the hapless Bertot is projected into the literary realm, where he cannot represent himself, but rather only be represented. The phrase ‘maufé li orent doné’ can be taken (in its colloquial sense) as a simple curse, which is the function it has elsewhere in the branch (see also vv. 200–01 and vv. 226–27).¹⁶ However, here something else is going on: those infernal snares are as likely to catch him in the web of associations they set up, one obvious comparison being the hellish weaponry carried by pagans, such as the shield borne by the wicked Abisme from the Oxford *Roland*.¹⁷ Bertot’s use of unusual weapons also allies him with the monstrous Saracens of the *chanson de geste*, who often wield sickles, flails, and so forth (a depiction that, *mutatis mutandis*, colours their warfaring as a non-noble activity, underpinning the difference of race and faith by a difference of social class).¹⁸ (Interestingly, according to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, such were the weapons of the men of the Age of Bronze, a time of ‘plots and snares, violence and the cursed love of gain’ (l. 1. 131).)

Bertot’s nets may have been given ‘by the devil’, but they are *enfumé* as is the lot of peasant tackle, besmirched with the soot from his fireplace.¹⁹ Their whiff of sulphur is more that of a blocked chimney than the fires of hell. The effect may be bathetic, but there is nonetheless a whiff of the symbolism attributed to smoke in thirteenth-century moral writings such as *Les Treis moz* by Guillaume le Clerc (vv. 45–60), where it stands for the pervasive, soiling influence of pride (thus not far removed from Simund de Freine’s *Roman de philosophie* (vv.

¹⁶ Adolf Tobler and Erhard Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, 11 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1925–2002), II (1956), 1903–04.

¹⁷ ‘Pierres i ad, metistes e topazes, / Esterminals e carbuncles ki ardent; / En Val Metas li dunat uns diables / Si li tramist li amiralz Galafres.’ *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. by Ian Short, *Lettres Gothiques* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1991) vv. 1661–64 (‘It has precious stones, amethysts and topazes, esterminals and brilliant carbuncles, the gift of a devil in Val Metas. It was the emir Galafre who gave it to him’; translation mine after Short).

¹⁸ Paul Bancourt, *Les Musulmans dans les chansons de geste du cycle du roi*, 2 vols (Aix en Provence: Université de Provence, 1982), II, 573–75 and p. 955.

¹⁹ See *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, ed. by J.-L. Perrier, C.F.M.A. (Paris: Champion, 1982), line 990; *Gaydon*, ed. by F. Guessard and S. Luce, *Les Anciens Poètes de la France* (Paris: A. Franck, 1862), line 2387; *Aiol*, ed. by J. Normand and Gaston Raynaud (Paris, 1877), lines 543, 668, 893.

801–18), where it symbolizes the vanity of earthly renown).²⁰ Thus the snares are arguably blackened by Guillaume le Clerc's soiling pollution (cousin to that resinous, entrapping materiality that Gaston Bachelard refers to as *le poisseux*).²¹ These are weapons that do not work in a scene that plays on the comedy of incompetence, with characters stumbling clumsily about while the props seem to take on a life of their own. Bertot damages his cabbages while trying to scare Renart into showing himself (vv. 218–21), a show of *maladresse* reminiscent of Rainouart's (initially unsuccessful) attempts to obtain a horse by killing its rider without crushing the mount at the same stroke.²² Renart then blunders into the nets that Bertot laid out badly, as one 'quite inexperienced in hawking or hunting' ('cil qui pas apris ne fu / Ne d'oiseler ne de chacier' vv. 206–07) and proceeds to get himself thoroughly entangled ('Tourne et retourne ça et la, / Quant plus tourne et plus s'enlace.' vv. 236–37) in a net that seems to wrap itself around him ('La roiz entour lui s'entourteille', line 230). In accordance with the rules of comedy, the presence of props undermines the agency of the characters. The sense that these tools then do not bring the world within their control goes hand-in-hand with the heavy use of ironic distanciation on the part of the narrator who mockingly paints the events as an encounter worthy of the *roman d'aventure*, with Bertot, not unlike Esclados li ros of Chrétien's *Le Chevalier au lion*, sallying forth to see who was unleashing a storm on his lands ('Saut por veoir que ce estoit / Qui ses gelines *tanpestoit*', vv. 191–92, my emphasis), but only to find, like Enide (*Erec et Enide*, line 2584), that 'tant grate chievre que mal gist' (line 300).²³

²⁰ For the text of *Les Treis moz*, see Robert Reinsch, 'Les Joies Nostre Dame des Guillaume le Clerc de Normandie', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 3 (1879), 201–31 (the text is dated to between 1227 and 1238, and based on Lothair of Segni's *De Misera Humanae Conditionis* (ibid., pp. 200–01)). For the text of *Le Roman de philosophie*, see *Les Œuvres de Simund de Freine*, ed. by John E. Matzke, S.A.T.F. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909), pp. 1–60 (text dated to end of twelfth century (ibid., p. xi)).

²¹ Bachelard contrasts the 'caractère gluant' of domestic routine with the lightness and freedom of the leisured aristocracy and their cousins (bohemians, *flâneurs*): 'S'il vient un *oisif*, tout lui semble *poisseux*, désagréablement poisseux; la cuisine encombrée, il la croit sale dans le temps même où elle participe par tant d'objets à l'esthétique du sirop' (G. Bachelard, *La Terre et les rêveries du repos: essai sur les images de l'intimité* (Paris: Corti, 1948), p. 118, author's emphasis).

²² *La Chanson de Guillaume*, ed. by Duncan MacMillan, 2 vols, S.A.T.F. (Paris: Picard, 1949), vv. 3081–123.

²³ *Erec et Enide*, ed. by J.-M. Fritz, in *Chrétien de Troyes: Romans* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994).

The encounter between the pair comes to centre on the mastery of codes, whether at a discursive level or in terms of physical performance. In this respect, as Kathryn Gravdal notes, the struggle amounts to a debate about which of the pair is more human: Bertot changes from peasant to giant and back, while Renart correspondingly transforms from animal pest to feudal lord.²⁴ However, the potential for any attempt at mastery to backfire is seen in Bertot's use of snares, which effectively prefigures his defeat as a form of *deditio per corrigiam*, the binding gift that placed serfs under a lord's power.²⁵ The emphasis on Bertot's ineptitude makes of his incompetence a form of impotent passivity, a refusal to allow him successful manipulation of the chivalric codes that would mark his virile status. Indeed, given that this is a comic text, it seems inevitable that the assimilation of peasant to Saracen would be fleeting.²⁶ Bertot's blundering thus condemns him to appear as less than either human or inhuman, the narrative refusing him the privileged and absolute difference which would be a source of power.

The asexuality of the peasant appears here as predicated on the fact that they are, if anything, objects of a domination thought of in gendered terms, presented as unable to be the masters and subjects of the codes of chivalric masculinity. As with Monty Python's Arthur taking Dennis for a woman from behind (a confusion compounded by the well-timed arrival of the Terry Jones peasant character in the same costume but also clearly in drag), peasant masculinity was something that did not always register on the social radar of the Middle Ages. This debate about social and sexual identity continues with Bertot's grappling. The binding that is a feature of the nets and of symbolic acts of allegiance is then picked up in the fox's bite, which moves from Bertot's feet to his thumb:

Et li vilainz le vet baillant
Aus pouces qu'il a dur et gros.
Toutes voies n'est pas tant os

²⁴ Kathryn Gravdal, *Vilain and Courtois: Transgressive Parody in French Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 97–100.

²⁵ See Jacques le Goff, 'The Symbolic Rite of Vasselage', in *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (London: Chicago University Press, 1980), pp. 239–88 (p. 250).

²⁶ 'Quand il s'agit du Sarrasin, la description se poursuit dans le sens de l'inhumain, de l'animalité, de la monstruosité, du diabolique, alors que pour le vilain, le rapprochement avec le géant n'est jamais que suggéré et bientôt suspendu.' Bancourt, *Musulmans dans les chansons de geste*, I, 79.

Que a la bouche li adese.
 Et Renart qui jute a malese,
 Quant voit que durement le taste,
 Si giete les denz, si le hape
 Ovec le pié par la main destre.
 Or est le vilain bien a mestre,
 Bien le vet Renart mestroiant. (vv. 284–93)

(Then the peasant tries pressing with his great, hard thumbs, but without daring to touch his mouth. Reynard, lying in great discomfort under this heavy-handed treatment, snapped his teeth and caught him by the right hand as well as the foot. Now the peasant has really found his master, and Renart has the upper hand.)

Terrorizing the uppity peasant, Renart shows him how to really borrow lines from epic, demonstrating a masterful grasp of the conventions, the *annominatio* of ‘mestre’ and ‘mestroiant’ emphatically underscoring who is the master. The bite appears as a parodic foreshadowing of the *immixtio manuum*, where ‘the enveloping pair of hands belongs to a person superior to the one whose hands are enclosed’. In a burlesque of feudal ceremonial, Bertot’s digits are presented in what seems like a quasi-phallic physicality, ‘dur et gros’.²⁷ However, although a considerable presence in the comic picture, the thumbs do not appear as the mark of the peasant’s active apprehension of the world; rather they are something for the fox to entrap. Indeed, in this moment, he rather appears precisely ‘all thumbs’: potentially probing active and yet mainly blindly clumsy. Renart is well placed to exploit this uncertainty:

Moult vet menaçant le vilain,
 Et dist qu’il li torra la vie
 Del corps, foi que il doit s’amie
 Que ja n’en aura reançon:
 Mielz li venist estre a Lançon
 Que il fust cheüz en ses mainz. (vv. 308–13)

²⁷ See Le Goff, ‘Symbolic Rite’, p. 246. Emphasis on Bertot’s ugliness hints at another tack to the representation of the peasant as other. The expression of the defects of the soul through the deformation of the body is a recurring theme in anti-peasant material, with class hostility assimilated to anti-Semitism: ‘What part of speech is a peasant? Noun. What noun? A Jew. Why? Because he is foolish and ugly / offensive in appearance [‘turpis’] like a Jew.’ See Paul Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 2nd edn (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1963), p. 197. For commentary, see Herman Braet, ‘“A Thing Most Brutish”: The Image of the Rustic in Old French Literature’, in *Agriculture in the Middle Ages: Technology, Practice and Representation*, ed. by Del Sweeney, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp. 191–204 (pp. 195–97).

(The fox heaps threats on the peasant, swearing by the faith he owes his lady love that he will tear the life from his body and accept no other payment. He would be safer at Lanson than to have fallen into his clutches here!)

Threats, courtly ladies, ransom, a possible nod to *Jehan de Lanson*: the accumulated furniture proves too much for Bertot, well and truly out of his depth here.²⁸ Wisely deciding to drop the combative clichés he cannot control, he picks up on what he is good at — abject submission and craven snivelling:

Tout en plorant merci li crie.
 'Sire Renart', fait il, 'merci!
 Lessiez moi, por Dieu vos en em pri,
 Conmandez moi ce que voudroiz,
 Et jel ferai, quar il est droiz,
 Et vostre hom seré tous jours mes.'
 'Filz a putain, vilain punés,
 Fet Renart, qu'alés vos disant?
 Moult m'aliez hui despisant
 Et moult me cuidiez bien prendre
 Quant vos roiseus alastes tendre
 Parmi le jardin conme foux.
 Mes si me puist aidier saint Lox,
 Vos le conparroiz hui moult chier.' (vv. 318–31)

(In floods of tears, he begs him for mercy. 'Sir Reynard', says he, 'have mercy on me! I implore you in God's name to let me go. Demand what you like of me, and I shall do it as is only right; and I'll be your vassal from now on.' 'Son of a whore, you base villain, what's that you say?' says Reynard. 'You treated me with very little respect today and had every intention of catching me when you went stupidly spreading your nets over the garden. But, with the help of saint Loup, you'll pay very dearly for it before the day is ended!')

Renart's trick is rendered all the more impressive by the fact that he is bound throughout the entire scene. Of course, for an episode that ends with the rerunning of Chantecler's escape from the fox's jaws, as per Branch II, *Les Premières Aventures*, one might well wonder how it is that he manages to hold on to Bertot's hand *and* foot with his teeth in addition to threatening him verbally at the same time. Here, however, the narrator seems more than willing to help the fox out, Renart's first tirade against the peasant taking the form of reported speech (vv. 308–13, cited above). From this uncertain beginning, his lengthy exchange

²⁸ Jean Dufournet, 'Littérature oralisante et subversion: la branche XVIII du *Roman de Renart* ou *Le Partage des proies*', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 22 (1979), 321–35 (p. 323).

with Bertot can then be read as serving to ensure the peasant is well snared in the web of fictions Renart elaborates before the fox is then finally released physically.

In that sense, the clear suggestion is that the machine was always already set in train, with Bertot's attempt to resist the fox haunted by its inevitable humiliating failure, the tools of resistance becoming those of subjugation and Bertot's actions suggesting the transfer of ownership and allegiance prior to his actual enunciation of the idea. Bertot holds out his gage ('sa foi li tant', line 405) and swears loyalty, holding his hand out towards the church ('Envers la moustier sa main tent', line 429) just as he had held out his thumb earlier to attempt to release his foot. By this ritual and its comic prefiguration in the form of the biting, Bertot becomes Renart's man 'of mouth and hands' in two senses.²⁹ As both Gravdal and Dufournet have argued, comedy can be said to arise in part from the fact that homage implies a considerable promotion for the peasant, not to mention the transfigured Renart, neither of whom have any place in such rituals. However, Bertot's gesture might not be that audacious: as Werner Rösener argues, peasants were thought of as owing a version of the duties of *auxilium* and *consilium* to their masters (here of course in the form of Bertot's advising Renart on his choice of chicken).³⁰ In that sense, Bertot was always already caught up in a world of transpositions and translations, but arguably not properly speaking part of the feudal world, a marginal status that leaves him ripe for exploitation.

Given Bertot's subsequent willingness to fall in with the feudal game, his defence of his property swept aside by a more masterful performance, the attack can be read as a sort of seduction that at least allows the farmer to be Renart's man if he cannot be his own. Indeed, the bite 'surrounding' the peasant's attempt to get a grip on the situation could be said to echo the temptation scene in the garden of Eden, Renart's jaws 'circumscribe' Bertot even as Satan sought to 'get round' Eve and foreshadow his flattery of Bertot, sketching in the alluring backdrop of a society obsessed with *los* and *pris*, where before there had only been peasant, predator, and farmland:

'quar tu es preudom.
Au mainz en as tu le renon:
Moult ai oï de toi parler.' (vv. 419–21)

²⁹ On the vassal as 'man of mouth and hands', see Le Goff, 'Symbolic Rite', p. 256.

³⁰ Werner Rösener, *Les Paysans dans l'histoire de l'Europe*, trans. by Denis-Armand Canal, *Faire l'Histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), pp. 61–62.

(‘For you are a worthy man, or at least have that reputation. I’ve heard a lot about you.’)

Marked by the contradictory impulses of a conservative meanness on the one hand and an Ambrosian industry that mirrors Eve’s openness to temptation, Bertot is made fruitful by the fox in that now he appears capable of generating an entire world of courtly fictions where before he was closed, sterile, and walled about. The man who would ‘rather have lost his beard’ than eat one of his chickens (vv. 117–18) is faced with being bearded by the fox. Just as his wife is absent here, so Bertot will be excluded from the ‘masculine and even virile’ system of homage, which can only mockingly call him ‘Bertot-le-Grand’ (‘Bertolz li Meres’, line 112).³¹ Of course, the recognition of high-status masculinity here is undercut by the very application of ideas of renown to a peasant, the comic devaluation of social currency allowing Bertot’s sister to receive a similar promotion, grandiosely referred to by the farmer as ‘Dame Haouis de Monjoie’ (line 475) and used to underwrite the farmer’s oath that his chicks are more succulent to eat than the cockerel. This snowballing pseudo-universe provides a mock underpinning to feudal rituals normally performed in public, but symbolically devalued here by the lack of anything other than the comic shadows of witness.³² Bertot generates his own spectres in a burgeoning local economy of fame and worth, transformations that required only the opportunity offered by the encounter between this apt pupil and his master the fox but which will still leave some names worth more than others. Following commentators such as R. Howard Bloch, we can see this questioning of the nature of society and fame as part of a wider reflection on the disruption of ‘natural’ social relations created by the resurgence of a money economy in the late twelfth century.³³ The shift is one from the isolated local economy to the wider sphere: inevitably entailing a reflection on how even to transport basic foodstuffs is to enter into the problematic practices of speculation, trade, and another form of *translatio*. The introduction

³¹ On homage, see Le Goff, ‘Symbolic Rite’, p. 261. In this regard, *Renart et Bertot* can be contrasted with the branch *Renart et le vilain Liétard* (Branch IX) where the female characters have a prime role in suggesting new directions in the narrative through their capacity for ‘despit’, for disregarding the contributions of others: it is Brunmatin who suggests how Liétard might deceive the fox (vv. 1142–211), and Hermeline who ‘rashly’ decides to haul the apparently dead Timer back to Maupertuis (vv. 1681–700).

³² Le Goff, ‘Symbolic Rite’, p. 260.

³³ R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (London: Chicago University Press, 1983), pp. 164–74.

of the idea of a wider market — originally part of the description of Bertot (vv. 113–21; vv. 127–29) — of any kind brings untold opportunities and problems. In this world, *vilains* seem to exist in a moment in which mankind's fatal error can be re-enacted anew. Assimilated to the Jews, who also appear to exist before the Incarnation insofar as they refuse to acknowledge Christ, both groups thus appear as historically separate from the rest of Christian society, existing in a time before the Incarnation and its revelation of the Word made flesh. Their labour appears as a form of pride, a failure to know one's place or identity. Renart replays this challenge to property-ownership at a lower level, with insults such as 'filz a putain, vilain punés' (line 324) or 'traîtres sers' (line 337).³⁴ Certainly, the injunctive force of these insults, the extent to which the name is 'imposed', as Ambrose puts it, should not be overlooked: to be 'sers' is to return to the 'proper' condition of servitude. And yet, the question remains after the Fall as to whether it is possible to imagine that 'proper condition', so much is the peasant the thing that does not know its place. It is for this reason that the *Renart* here brings the full weight of literary culture to the policing of social boundaries, fox and narrator uniting to make sure Bertot feels the full sting of the contempt as part of the constant work of oppression that must keep him in his place.

To draw on one of Brian Levy's major interests, some of the most striking representations of the medieval peasantry in recent times have come from cinema. One need only think of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* or *Les Visiteurs*. Both of these films interweave tensions about social class with tensions about sexuality. As part of a deliberately exaggerated comedy of anachronism, the first, living in the enclave of 'an anarcho-syndicalist commune', wields language and attitudes that are not of their time. The second shows the descendant of the peasant character as an effete homosexual, ultimately transported back into the Middle Ages where suddenly he finds himself sprawled in the mud, surrounded by his medieval social equals, their leering faces worthy of Hieronymus Bosch or Peter Breughel, in a scene where it is not clear whether he is to be the object of ridicule or gang rape in the manner of the cruel and grotesque scene from Ingmar Bergman's *Virgin Spring*. What these scenes remind us is that the denigration of peasants both targeted their sexuality and was, in a sense, sexual in so far as it constituted an assertion of virile status on the part of a nobility that relegated their inferiors and would-be competitors to the status of non-men,

³⁴ On the use of the term 'serf', see Pierre Bonnassie, *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe*, trans. by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 326–27.

enacted in *Renart et Bertot* through the reductive representation of Bertot’s body and actions, his humiliation and ‘seduction’ by the fox into a world of social promotion, a seduction that is then the echo of the primal seduction of all peasants into a world of greed. This sexual element appears implicit and latent in a number of medieval works. The peasant husband of *Berangier au lonc cul*, unable to recognize his wife, knows only that he has been unmanned through being forced into a degrading quasi-sexual act with another man. In *Trubert*, the duke likewise offers Trubert his bottom with a readiness that would not have been out of place in Sade’s *120 Journées*. Likewise, in the later *Petit Jehan de Saintré*, the upstart abbot persuades the eponymous hero to participate in a wrestling match where the clutch of his hairy thighs is represented as being as inappropriate and worthy of punishment as it implicitly should in his encounter with ‘Bele Cousine’. The case of *Renart et Bertot* seems rather more ambiguous. In a work that often sees fecundity of invention as the correlate of sexual potency, the fact that debates about meaning and mastery in language should have a sexual content is unsurprising in some respects. Furthermore, the scene’s biblical and theological resonances hint at models of temptation and Fall commonly couched in terms of seduction and gender inversion. If Renart’s intervention makes of this place something more than just a farm run by a niggardly farmer, then this is because Bertot was ultimately all too ready to submit himself to the attentions of a creature who confesses in one branch to not being particular as to whether the husband or the wife is the recipient of his attentions (*La Confession Renart*, vv. 707–09). He is thus — to use a rather colourful term that has the advantage of painting the picture short — effectively ‘f***ed over’ by the man he accepts as his master. Bertot may make a show of resistance, but, by having got into the business of commerce and so having welcomed the presence of the devil, he was always already disposed to play the part of Eve.

CLERGIE? CHEVALERIE? RENARDIE?
LE BESTIAIRE D'AMOUR AND A WOMAN'S RESPONSE

Jeanette Beer

The *Physiologus*-derived bestiary underwent an intriguing transformation in the middle of the thirteenth century when Richard de Fournival desacralized it into a bestiary of love.¹ Critical judgements concerning the success of the resulting hybrid have been perplexingly varied ever since. Is *Le Bestiaire d'amour* 'light and clever'² or 'froid et monotone' [cold and monotonous]?³ Is it 'eine der abgeschmacktesten Ausgeburten einer innerlich verlogenen rein conventionellen Liebespoesie' [one of the most fatuous monstrosities of a totally mendacious and quite conventional love poetry]?⁴ Is it a 'standard love-letter'?⁵ Or (worst of all, since the verdict was rendered by its first editor!) is it 'plein de fadeurs' [full of insipidities]?⁶

¹ Richard de Fournival, *Li bestiaires d'amours di Maistre Richart de Fornival e li response du bestiaire*, ed. by Cesare Segre (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1957). All references are to this edition. All translations are my own. *Master Richard's Bestiary of Love and Response*, trans. and introd. by Jeanette Beer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986; repr. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2000).

² Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 46.

³ Paul Meyer, 'Les Bestiaires', *Histoire littéraire de la France*, 34 (1914), 362–91 (p. 389).

⁴ F. Lauchert, *Geschichte des Physiologus* (Strasbourg, 1889), p. 187.

⁵ Helen Solterer, 'Letter-Writing and Picture-Reading: The *Bestiaire d'amour* and Medieval Textuality', *Word and Image*, 5.1 (1989), 131–47 (p. 131).

⁶ Richard de Fournival, *Le Bestiaire d'amour*, ed. by Célestin Hippeau (Paris, 1860; repr. Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1969).

My own reading led me in a different direction from 'fadeurs', and this *Festschrift*, dedicated to a colleague who was supremely sensitive to the brilliant lightness and the powerful impact of humour, is an appropriate context in which to explore further the work's complexities. One of the most fascinating of these is Richard's re-presentation of the *clerc-chevalier* debate.

As a *clerc* Richard's qualifications were impeccable. A fine classical scholar, he wrote a treatise *De arte alchemica*, an astrological *Nativitas*, and four Ovidian works on love. He is the presumed author, even, of a three-volume Ovidian hoax, *De Vetula*, which was not unmasked as inauthentic until many decades later. And he put together a personal library of almost three hundred manuscripts which he made available to young scholars in Amiens. To provide easy access to the volumes he also compiled a meticulous Latin catalogue, *Biblionomia*, which today provides invaluable information concerning the scholarly works that were current in his day. Richard's attitude to *clergie* is therefore unambiguous, as the opening paragraph of *Le Bestiaire d'amour* makes clear:

Toutes gens desirent par nature a savoir. Et pour chu ke nus ne puet tout savoir, ja soit che ke cascade cose puist estre seüe, si covient il ke sacuns sache aucune cose, et che ke li uns ne set mie, ke li autres le sache; si ke tout est seü en tel maniere qu'il n'est seü de nullui a par lui, ains est seü de tous ensamble. Mais il est ensi ke toutes gens ne vivent mie ensamble, ains sont li un mort avant ke li autre naissent, et cil ki ont esté cha en ariere ont seü tel cose ke nus ki ore endroit vive ne le conquerroit de son sens, ne ne seroit seü, s'on ne le savoit par les anchiens.

[All men naturally desire knowledge. And inasmuch as no one has the capacity to know everything (although everything has the capacity to be known), it behooves everyone to know something, then what one man does not know another will. Thus everything is known in such a manner that it is not known by one man for himself, but rather it is known by all in common. But all men do not coexist together. Some die and others then are born. Our forebears knew what no one now alive could find out by his own intelligence, and it would not be known unless it were known from the ancients.]

That initial sentence about 'savoir' (from *Metaphysics* I) is appropriate homage to man's intellect, and the brief didactic explanation after it demonstrates serious pedagogical intent. Noting that there are two gateways to memory, the eye and the ear, Richard says his bestiary will access those gateways through its 'painture' [depiction] and 'parole' [description].

When this pedagogical idealism is translated into an act of love-*courtoisie* dedicated to a lady, however, the nature of Richard's intentions begins to appear more complex. He says he is sending this new work to his lady in the hope that the combined effect of the words and pictures will recall him to her memory every time she looks at/hears them. He rationalizes this wish to her as follows:

‘Car quant on voit painte une estoire, ou de Troies ou d’autre, on voit les fais des preudhommes ki cha en ariere furent, ausi com s’il fussent present’ (p. 5, lines 3–5) [For when one sees the depiction of a history of Troy or of some other place, one sees the deeds of those past heroes as if they were present].

By the Trojan analogy Richard deftly (subliminally) plants a suggestion of heroic deeds. He then reinforces this chivalric suggestion when he describes his work by the military metaphor ‘ariereban’. His explanation is both royal and military. An ‘ariereban’ is, he says, a king’s final attempt to succeed in alien territory by summoning all his troops:

ausi comme uns rois, quant il va guerrier fors de son roialme, il en maine de ses melleurs hommes une partie, et s’en lasse encore gringnor partie a sa terre garder: mais quant il voit qu’il ne se puet soufire a tant de gent com il a mené, si parmande tous chiaux q’il a laissiés et fait son ariereban: ausi me covient il faire (p. 7, line 8 – p. 8, line 1)

[As a king who goes to wage war outside his kingdom will take with him a group of his best men, leaving an even greater number behind to guard his territory. But when he sees the number he has taken cannot suffice for his needs, he summons all of those he left behind and makes his *arrière-ban*, so I must do.]

Thus far, his introduction suggests lofty things to come. It designates the *Bestiaire d’amour* as a majestic enterprise, commends it to a public who knows and loves courtly romances, and places the narrator-lover among the ranks of favoured Trojan heroes. The implementation of the promise begins screechingly, however. The first image that will, as infallibly as a portrait of Eneas, inscribe Richard-lover upon his lady’s memory is the cock crowing at the top of its lungs at the desperate hour of midnight: ‘de tant com il cante plus pres de la mienuit, si cante plus efforcement et plus engrosse sa vois’ (p. 9, lines 1–2) [the closer to midnight it sings, the more forcefully it sings and the more it amplifies its voice].

Next comes the wild ass, the creature which in all the world, Richard says, has the ugliest and most horrendous voice, and which eventually busts its guts in ravenous braying: ‘met il si grant paine a racaner qu’il se desront tous’ (p. 10, line 6) [it puts such effort into braying that it bursts asunder]. Then follows a speechless, disempowered wolf, a cricket that has sung its life away, a swan whose ‘swansong’ signifies imminent death, and a precocious child whose brilliance reveals he is not long for this world. Each of these images is, by Richard’s own admission, intended to imprint images of the chancellor-*clerc* upon his lady’s memory forever.

Next, with destructive glee and with a ‘parole’ more graphic than any illuminator’s ‘painture’, Richard devalues his past love-lyricism. He ‘repents’ of his many importunate requests to ‘la dame’. They were so much dog-vomit.

Elas! et si me sui puis tantes fois repentis de [c]hou ke je vous avoie proié, por vostre douce compaignie perdre. Car se jou puisse faire ausi comme li chiens, ki est de tel nature ke quant il a vomé, k'i repaire a son vomite et le remangüe, jou eüise volentiers me proiere rengloutie cent fois, puis k'ele me fu volée des dens (p. 14, line 8 – p. 15, line 2)

[Alas! I have so often since repented that I entreated you and thus lost your sweet company. For if I could have acted like the dog, which is of such a nature that, after vomiting, it can return to its vomit and re-eat it, I would happily have swallowed down my pleading a hundred times, after it flew out through my teeth.]

The true nature of this 'repentance' lends itself to surmise. Is it real regret at having caused offence to *la belle dame sans merci*, an acceptable sentiment for a subjugated lover? Or has some fundamental revulsion against love itself seized France's *magister amoris*? Because of the ambivalence Lucken calls Richard 'ce trouvère à moitié repenté' [this half-repentant troubadour].⁷ Yet Richard never abandons the stance of lover-clerc throughout *Le Bestiaire d'amour*, however ambiguous his proclamations may seem and however acrid his representation of the love situation may become.

Later mentions of repentance (a clerical theme if ever there was one!) are directives from Richard to 'la dame', and his choice of illustrative metaphors is far from chivalrous. His lady is the crocodile and he is the man she has swallowed. The only way he can be avenged on her for his love-death is 'k'ele se repentist del mal k'ele m'aroit fait' (p. 65, lines 3–4) [that she would repent of the harm she had done me]. May she weep her crocodile tears endlessly. He finds this wish a courteous one on his part, thus arrogating to himself the chivalric quality of 'courtoisie'. 'Car une courtoise maniere de vengeance si est repentance' (ibid., lines 4–6) [for repentance is a courtly type of vengeance]. It then occurs to him that a worse sort of vengeance is possible and he claims to fear this terrible fate for her. He hypothesizes misogynistically that, having dismissed her 'loial ami' (Richard), she will inevitably (woman-like!) welcome other lovers. Enter the *chevalier*, aka the hydra. The hydra-lover 'a autretant d'amies com il a d'acointances' (p. 68, line 8) [has as many loves as he has acquaintances], and when the crocodile swallows *this* enemy, she will be disembowelled as the hydra bursts forth 'a grant joie de sa victorie' (p. 68, line 5) [with great joy at its victory].

⁷ Christopher Lucken, 'Richard de Fournival, ou le Clerc de l'amour', in *Le Clerc au Moyen Age: [Actes du vingtième colloque] du Centre universitaire d'études et de recherche médiévales d'Aix* (Aix-en-Provence: Centre Universitaire d'Etudes et de Recherches Médiévales 37, 1995), pp. 401–15 (p. 415).

Convinced by the hateful image, Richard angrily berates the 'sengnourie' of fawning courtly lovers who pretend to parcel out their hearts like players of the game *brichoir*. If Freud did not exist, it would not be necessary to invent him to perceive the sexual symbolism of the baton ('brichoir') in Richard's ludic simile. In his fantasy, the lady's *chevalier*-lover resembles:

cil ki porte le brichoart, ki a tous l'offre et a nullui ne le laie. Car au mains le devoit il laissier en .i. lieu, s'il voloît droit faire. Mais quant il veut son compangnon faire parfaitement muser, si le porte. Ensi servent tel gent les dames et les damoiselles de leur cuers. Et neporquant s'il en laissoient ore en cascun lieu une partie, si ne quideroi je mie qu'il en peüssent bone besonge faire (p. 69, line 5 – p. 70, line 3).

[the one who holds the baton in the game of 'brichouart' and offers it to all but leaves it with nobody. If he wished to be fair, he should at least leave it in one place. But since he wants to fool his companion totally, he carries it with him. That is how such men serve women and maidens with their hearts. And even if they left a part in every place, I should not think they could do any good by that.]

Teasing insincerity and promiscuity are not the only flaws of such *chevaliers*. Richard warns of their feigned obeisance. They will humbly beg to be his lady's knight, they will indiscreetly tout their love to all and sundry, they will make shows of generosity and prowess in her name, then have the news proclaimed loudly from the rooftops that they are doing these admirable things for love of 'that sweet lady whom the whole world is bound to adore':

il ne quidera mie estre ses chevaliers, s'il ne le soushaide a ses cauches lachier et a son aler joster devant tant de gent que ki que soit li redie, n'il ne quidera mie k'ele li ait aidie a valoir, s'il ne l'a escriee au ferir des essperons si ke tout l'oient. Et ke plus est, mais ke pis est: il li samble k'il lui convient avoir un menestrel ki crie a le bretesce ke ses sire ne fait ne largece ne proesce fors por l'amour a cele bele douce ke tous li mons doit aouer (p. 72, lines 1–7).

[he will not believe he is her knight unless he gives her knightly service even while he laces up his leggings or is on his way to joust, in front of such a host of people that anyone of them may repeat it; nor will he believe that she has helped him prove his worth unless he has shouted her identity for all to hear while spurring on his horse. What is more — and what is worse — he seems to think that he must have a minstrel shouting from the parapets that his lord is performing each and every act of generosity and prowess solely for the love of that sweet creature whom the entire world must adore.]

A new series of animals conveys Richard's scathing contempt for the lady's secular lovers. They are the vipers, the spoiled baby monkeys, the hedgehogs loading apples on to their spines, whales upon which unsuspecting travellers anchor themselves. They are like the fox ('goupil') which rolls in red mud and

plays dead with its tongue hanging out, in order to catch the chickens, then snaps them by the head and devours them. They are the vultures which, looking for carcasses, follow the army (women, of course, being the battlefield): 'Cis voltoirs senefie cheuas ki sievent les dames et les damoiseles por faire leur preu d'eles, combien k'eles en doivent empirier' (p. 101, lines 3–5) [This vulture signifies those who follow women and maidens to take advantage of them, however much the women may be hurt by this].

Hoping to have convinced 'la dame' of his superiority over the opposition in the lists of this war Richard, ever the 'courtly' lover, ends his love-bestiary with a plea for mercy. *Chevalerie* persists, then, to the very end of *Le Bestiaire d'amour* which concludes with a conventional pose of humility to 'la dame'. But if Richard's public had any knowledge at all of the original bestiary's theocentric message, they might have read *clergie* as well as *chevalerie* in the didactic implications of the erotica. For example, although the unicorn-virgin exemplum was serving to express Richard's hopeless love, it could equally well be exposing his lady's flaws contrastively against the original *pucele*. Unlike the original unicorn-taming virgin, Richard's lady was no Virgin Mary, just as Richard was no Jesus Christ! And, as he makes clear, *his* lady lacks the ideal qualities he most craves: nurturing sympathy and resuscitative healing powers. She does not even *listen* to him! As for Richard, he makes no claims to being the Lion of Judah; self-parodically, he portrays himself as nothing but a braying *onager*.⁸ The man of reason has become witless through love, and it is unclear whether this is a compliment or an insult to 'la dame'.

Whatever interpretation his public actually chose to impose upon it, the hybrid love-bestiary, which married *chevalerie* to *clergie*, was unquestionably a success. There remain twenty extant manuscripts of it, not to mention the many translations, imitations, and textual borrowings. Clearly, *Le Bestiaire d'amour* has the potential to be all things to all men. But not perhaps to all *women*. An important indication that all of the female public might not have welcomed Richard-clerc's formulations of love is to be found in a work that was appended to the *Bestiaire d'amour* in a handful of later manuscripts. The rubrics of this rebuttal, when they give any authorial information at all, attribute it to 'la dame' for whom *Le Bestiaire d'amour* was written. And there is no question that the *Response* is a pendant to Richard's bestiary, because it is incomprehensible without

⁸ For further discussion of the contrastive possibilities of Richard's imagery when seen against the traditional bestiary, see Jeanette Beer, *Beasts of Love: Richard de Fournival's 'Bestiaire d'amour' and a Woman's Response* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

it and is structured to counter each of Richard's didactic exempla. This essay will restrict itself to aspects that are relevant to the *clergie* versus *chevalerie* debate.

The *Response* begins with a broadside attack upon Richard's clerical presumptions and, even bolder, upon the cleric himself. No recourse to Aristotle here! Instead it issues the following personal reproof: 'Hom qui sens et discretion a en soi ne doit metre s'entente ne son tans a cose nule dire ne faire par coi nus ne nule soit empiriés; anchois fait chil bonne oevre qui aucune chose puet dire et faire qui puist porter pourfit as non sachans' (p. 105, lines 1–4) [A man who has intelligence and discretion must not employ his time or his attention to say or do anything by which any man or any woman may be damaged, but the person who is able to say or do something which is profitable to the ignorant is accomplishing good work].

This word of a scold attacks Richard's professional and personal integrity. If a man has sense or discretion, he will do no harm to any human being, male or female. There is no privileging of *savoir* here, and the author clearly has strong views concerning the proper role of *clercs*. *By their works ye shall know them*, she strongly implies. Approval goes to anyone whose words benefit the *non sachans*, among whom the author presumably includes most women, perhaps even herself if she is non-Latin literate. This *prise de position* legitimizes what the author is about to do in her *Response*, viz., counteract the deleterious effects of Richard's bestiary by the authority, not of *clergie*, but of the knowledge that is vested in her as a woman: 'Car encore ne puisse je savoir tout che que vous savés, si sai je aucune chose que vous ne savés mie. Dont il m'est bien mestiers que je m'en aïe selonc che qu'il plaist a nostre Seigneur, qui mie de moins souffissant matere ne me vaut faire comme il fist vous' (p. 106, lines 13–18) [For although I cannot know all that you know, yet I know something that you do not. Wherefore it is very useful for me to aid myself with that since my need is great, I who am a woman in conformity with Our Lord's good pleasure, Who did not want to make me of less good substance than He made you].

Richard's stance of *courtoisie* as he presents himself humbly to 'la dame' is now condemned as clerical hypocrisy. With the aid of a praying-preying pun which the author repeats and underlines for women's edification, she denounces the threat posed by the *clerc*, 'cis dyables oisiaus de proie qui si vient en seursaut que a paines est nus que il ne sousprende, che sont chil clerc que si s'afaitent en courtoisie et en leur beles paroles, qu'il n'est dame ne demoisele qui devant aus puist durer qu'il ne veuillent prendre' (p. 133, lines 11–15) [that diabolical bird of prey that arrives so suddenly that there is scarcely anyone whom it does not surprise, I speak of those clerics who are so decked out with courtesy and fine

words that there is no woman or maiden who can withstand them, whom they do not wish to take].

The real fount of *courtoisie* for her is, interestingly, God, by virtue of His graciousness to womankind. God's grace was such that He chose to create woman of better substance than man. Thanks to the nobility of the divine artisan, 'si noble ouvrier' (p. 108, line 15), woman was the nobler creation, even though man was given dominion (*seigneurie*) over every creature: 'nous sommes plus noblement crées que vous, biaux maistres, n'aiés esté (ibid., lines 21–22) [we are created of nobler stuff than you were, fair master]. (Noteworthy in passing is the double sting in that ironic 'biaux maistres': anti-clerc, anti-dominator!) She replaces Richard's *courtois* posturing to a superior power, 'la dame', with a reminder of proper hierarchy as she sees it. Every creature owes obeisance to its source, woman to man, certainly, but also man to the earth, and the earth to God. So much for Richard's self-flagellation before a pedestal-woman!

The relative merits of *chevalier* and *clerc* also are discussed succinctly in the *Response*. The *clerc* is the whale which drowns those who unsuspectingly rest on the seeming 'island'. To listen to a *clerc*'s fine words is to invite death, for *clercs*, however simple their manner, are not to be trusted. And in purely mercenary terms, love between a woman and a *clerc* is a bad deal in which both lose. If they had not been so foolish, the *clerc* could have had a prebend from the Church, and the woman could have married a respectable *chevalier* who would have had the means to support her decently and honourably.

Tout autel puis je dire de cheles qui cuident d'aucuns clers qui sont simple en maniere, si sanle que bien s'i puet on fier, et maintenant s'aerdent a escouter leur paroles, et s'i delitent tant que li uns et li autres est pris et se metent du tout au desous. Li clers em pert a estre pourveüs de sainte Eglise, ou il seroit canoinnes ou vesques, et li demoisele aroit .j. chevalier gentil home dont ele seroit a honneur et deportee plus que de chelui qui tel riqueche n'a mie (p. 134, line 19 – p. 135, line 5)

[I can say the same of those women who believe of certain clerics who are simple in their manner that they are seemingly worthy of complete trust, so the women hang on their words and delight in them until one and the other are caught and completely undone. For the cleric loses a prebend from our Holy Church where he could be canon or bishop, and the maiden could have had a knightly gentleman who would give her more happiness and honor than the cleric, who has no comparable wealth.]

Thus, in the *Response*'s presentation of the *clerc-chevalier* question, there is clearly no contest: the *chevalier* wins unequivocally on all counts.

At this juncture, the author makes a very personal attack. The context in which she chooses to launch it is the description of the *goupil*. Richard had diverted the exemplum from its original purpose in the bestiary where 'vulpes

figuram habet diaboli', in order to warn the woman against would-be lovers (other than Richard!). These pretended lovelorn *chevaliers* would, he opined, falsely claim to be dying of love while they are intent only on 'trecherie' (p. 100, line 4)

Et teus dist qu'il se meurt d'amours, qu'il n'en sent ne mal ne dolour, et en dechoivent la bone gent ausi com li gorpiex fait les piies. Car li gorpiex est de tele nature que quant il a faim et il ne trove ke mangier, il se touelle en la boe de rouge terre, et se couche geule bae la langue fors, ausi com s'il fust mors sanglens. Et lors viennent les piies ki mort le quident, si li voellent manguer le langue. Et il gete les dens, si les prent par les testes et les deveure. (p. 99, line 6 – p. 100, line 2)

[A man will say he is dying of love when he feels no pain or hurt, and these deceive good folk just as the fox deceives the magpies. For the fox is of such a nature that when it is hungry and finds nothing to eat, it will roll in the mud of red earth and will lie down with its jaws hanging open and its tongue out, as if it had bled to death. Then come the magpies, thinking it dead, and they try to eat the tongue. And the fox bares its teeth, seizes them by the head, and devours them.]

In a telling switch, the author of the *Response* substitutes for the bestiary's traditional 'goupil' the word 'renart' then, playing simultaneously upon Richard's name, exclaims ironically: 'Ahi Renart, con vous avés le langue traite hors sans raison; et sans faille sans aucune raison, n'est che pas? Car je cuit bien que s'il n'eüst fain, ja ne se meteroit ou point, qu'il se met, ensi que jou ai entendu' (p. 135, lines 9–12) [Ah, Reynard, how far out your tongue is hanging! For no reason, of course, I suppose! I am sure that if Reynard were not hungry, his tongue would never hang out in the way I heard]. The salvo projects on to Richard all the literary fox's misdemeanours, not least of which was his 'confessio Renardi', by then synonymous with insincerity.⁹ By this meddling with a single syllable, 'la dame' imprints on the name Richard the powerful image of an infamous animal deceiver. It is a brilliant retort to all Richard's 'painture - parole' pedagogy, for the *Response* has cleverly denigrated both Richard and his *Bestiaire d'amour* in a single caricature.

⁹ It is worth noting that this 'goupil - renard' interchange provides lexical evidence of the continuing usage in the thirteenth century of both French words for 'fox': 'goupil' and 'renard.' The former had always been used in the bestiary, while the latter was a neologism resulting from the vogue of the *Roman de Renart*. If the *Response* had been written a few decades later when 'renard' had totally replaced 'goupil', its tricky literary origins would have been taken for granted, and the woman's retort would have been less feisty. And today we can only imagine its topical verve. In its own day, however, the woman's word-play was richly insulting.

In all fairness it must be said that, like all caricatures, it is a misrepresentation. In her intentness to negate, the author of the *Response* has ignored, perhaps never saw, the complexities of a work which can be read in so many different ways. *Her* transcendent aim was to neutralize the deleterious effect of a work in which *clergie* dared to pose as *chevalerie*. To that end, her transformation of Richard's *chevalerie* into *renardie* was justified.

POSTFACE:
LE *MAGNIFICAT* DANS LES STALLES DE BEVERLEY

Frédéric Billiet

en hommage à Brian Levy

Brian Levy m'a donné la joie de découvrir l'église St Mary de Beverley (Yorkshire), en compagnie d'Elaine Block qui souhaitait photographier une nouvelle fois les stalles du chœur.¹ Depuis longtemps déjà, ce brillant spécialiste des fabliaux savait ce que pouvait apporter l'interdisciplinarité et ne manquait jamais une occasion de réunir autour de lui musicologues et historiens de l'art pour mieux comprendre toute la subtilité du monde médiéval. Ce jour là, les stalles de l'église St Mary nous ont livré un secret et cette découverte musicale est dédiée à ce grand médiéviste malheureusement disparu.

Il s'agissait de photographier les musiciens sculptés dans cet ensemble afin d'enrichir une base de donnée spécialisée dans les scènes musicales dans les stalles médiévales.² L'ensemble de l'église St Mary de Beverley, réalisé en 1445 par des sculpteurs de l'école de Ripon,³ en comporte 12, dont une série d'appuis-main

¹ Elaine C. Block prépare le *Corpus of Medieval Misericords: Iconographic Index* — à paraître en 2007 chez Brepols.

² Cette base de données est accessible sur le site de l'Université de Paris Sorbonne: <<http://www.pm.paris4.sorbonne.fr/>>.

³ Restauration de l'ensemble de stalles vers 1864 par Gilbert Scott. Quelques miséricordes sont de facture moderne.

représentant des anges tenant ou jouant des instruments (aulos,⁴ harpe, luth, nacaires, vièle et psaltérion).



Figure 22. a: Ange à la vièle jouée de la main gauche. / b: Ange au luth. / c: Ange à l'aulos. Beverley St Mary.

Ce groupe de musiciens de bois, émergeant sur les appuis-main, cerne l'espace central du chœur comme pour accompagner les chanteurs autour du lutrin. Rien ne s'opposait à l'époque à ce que les musiciens de la confrérie mettent leur art au service d'une liturgie plus solennelle en lui donnant une allure de concert céleste. Mais ils n'étaient que tolérés puisque leur art n'était pas une science.⁵ Il ne faut donc pas s'étonner de trouver des ailes accolées aux instrumentistes vêtus de leur costume traditionnel: robes, ceinture et chapeaux. Ces 'musiciens angélisés' ne sont certainement pas sans rapports avec les personnages, plus profanes, sculptés un siècle plus tard sur un chapiteau polychrome de la colonne dite 'des ménestrels' situé à quelques mètres du chœur.⁶

⁴ Les doigts du personnage sont placés sur deux tuyaux accolés mutilés qui pourraient évoquer l'aulos antique – deux tuyaux cylindriques munis chacun d'une anche, peu usité à cette époque. Dans l'ouvrage *Minstrels & Angels*, paru aux Fallen Leaf Press de Berkeley, Jeremy et Gwen Montagu ont montré que cet instrument était fréquemment sculpté dans l'Angleterre médiévale: Hull, Lincoln, Handwell. De même, nous avons pu constater que le modèle de cornemuse choisi par les sculpteurs de l'école de Ripon présente deux chalumeaux accolés.

⁵ Frédéric Billiet, '*Diabolus in musica* dans les stalles médiévales: significations du désordre musical', Actes du colloque Misericordia de Sheffield 2003, à paraître chez Brepols.

⁶ Minstrel's pillar (1524).

Ces cinq personnages représentent la puissante Confrérie des musiciens (Northern Minstrels' Guild) qui a probablement participé à la reconstruction de la nef entre 1520 et 1524,⁷ et dont on retrouve des témoignages. Ces musiciens de tradition orale avaient pris l'habitude de se rassembler dans la ville de Beverley et leur présence a dû impressionner les habitants, comme en témoignent les sculptures plus anciennes situées dans le *Choir Vestry* de l'église St Mary,⁸ et celles du XIV^e siècle dans l'aile Nord de la nef de la cathédrale de Beverley (Beverley Minster).



Figure 23. a: Minstrel's Pillar, Nave. / b: Joueur de vièle, Choir Vestry. Beverley St Mary.

Des appuis-main aux miséricordes la transition est facile et notre attention de musicologue s'est immédiatement portée sur la miséricorde 14 des stalles, côté Nord (N 14). La scène représente deux renards qui, couverts du chaperon des clercs, chantent autour d'un grand lutrin en forme d'aigle sur lequel est posé un manuscrit. Les deux renards, à défaut de s'intéresser au volatile, posent chacun une patte sur un folio du manuscrit afin de le maintenir ouvert.

Tout semble indiquer qu'il s'agit d'une scène de chant. En effet, pour distinguer l'action de chanter de celle de lire, les huchiers avaient pour habitude de

⁷ W. C. B. Smith, notice pour la visite de l'église Sainte Marie de Beverley (trad. M. J. J. Nicholson), s.l.n.d. Lire aussi Revd David Hoskin, *A Guide to St Mary's Church* (Beverley: St Mary's P.c.c., 1998) à partir des travaux de John Bilson publiés dans le *Yorshire Archaeological Journal*.

⁸ Chapiteaux probablement sculptés au XIII^e siècle.



Figure 24. Miséricorde N-14. Beverley St Mary.

placer plusieurs personnages autour du livre.⁹ Il faut cependant préciser que cette disposition des chanteurs peut aussi bien évoquer la pratique de la monodie que celle de la polyphonie, le chant sur le livre — *cantus super librum* — permettant d'ajouter une ou deux voix improvisées à partir d'une seule voix notée, issue du répertoire liturgique. Ce type de polyphonie était répandu au XV^e siècle, mais pouvait être facilement tourné en dérision en cas d'incompétence des chanteurs.



Figure 25a. Stalles d'Auch. Gers.

⁹ Voir les scènes de chant représentées dans les ensembles d'Auch, d'Amiens, de Zamora.



Figure 25b. Stalles d'Amiens. Somme.

l'observation de la miséricorde. De plus, le manque de lumière compensé par le flash trop violent des appareils photographiques 'argentiques' ne permettaient pas de repérer qu'une notation musicale pouvait avoir été gravée sur un si petit support (environ 4/4 cm). Lors de cette visite de l'église avec Brian Levy, la résolution numérique rend soudain visible 'la musique pour les yeux' (Augenmusik).



Figure 26. Détail de la miséricorde de Beverley.

Il s'agit d'une mélodie très précisément transcrite en notation dite 'carrée' sur quatre lignes, avec une clé d'ut sur la troisième ligne. Un texte en écriture gothique difficile à lire accompagne cette monodie: '*Magnificat*' sur le verso et

‘*anima*’ sur le recto du manuscrit sculpté. C’est donc l’intonation du *Magnificat* en 8^e ton, cantique de la Vierge Marie dans l’évangile selon saint Luc: ‘Mon âme glorifie le Seigneur’.

La comparaison entre le Magnificat gravé à Beverley et la version du *Paroissien Romain 800* des éditions de Solesmes confirme cette identification du chant:

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Magnificat. Ton solennel 8. G, G*, c.

Ton 8. G, G*, c.

Médiantes à 1 accent avec 3 syllabes de préparation.

Terminaisons à 1 accent avec 2 syllabes de préparation.

1. Magni- fi-cat *

2. Et exsultávit spí- ri-tus mé- us * in Dé-o sa-lu- tá-ri mé- o.

á-nima mé-a Dóminum.

Figure 27a. ‘Magnificat’ extrait du *Paroissien romain* N°800, Tournai, Desclée, 1954.

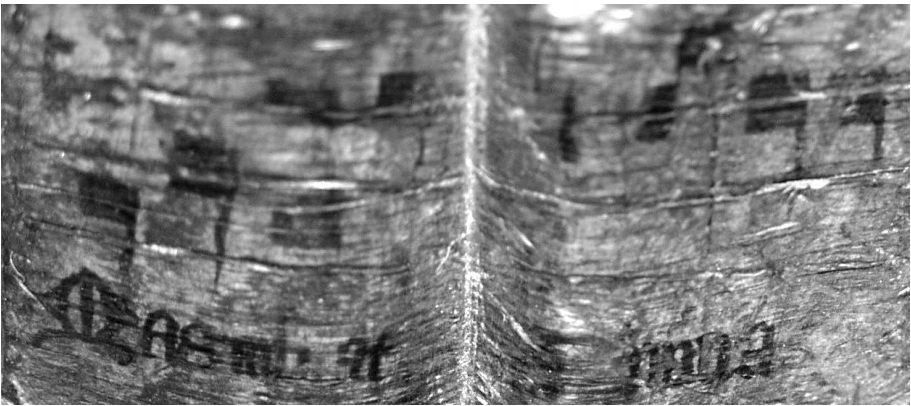


Figure 27b. ‘Magnificat’ des stalles de Beverley.

Cependant, il faut noter quelques variantes. Les figures de notes ne sont pas exactement les mêmes:

	<i>Ma</i>	<i>gni</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>(cat)</i>	<i>cat</i>
Incipit Beverley	<i>virga</i>	<i>virga</i>	<i>pes</i>	<i>virga</i>	
Incipit du 800	<i>punctum</i>	<i>Clivis</i> ¹⁰	<i>pes</i>	<i>punctum</i>	<i>punctum</i>

¹⁰ Clivis: deux notes descendantes.

La comparaison des deux versions permet de mieux reconstituer la notation pyrogravée qui se décompose en deux *virga* immédiatement suivies d'un *pes* (ou *virga strata*)¹¹ sur le 'fi' de 'Magnificat'. Le chanteur pourrait instinctivement allonger la *virga* de 'gni' et celle sur 'cat' pour retrouver la rythmique de la célèbre mélodie.

Le folio en recto du manuscrit gravé sur la miséricorde présente comme une contraction de la deuxième partie de la phrase musicale sous laquelle a été placé '*anima*'. Le graveur aurait donc retenu deux éléments caractéristiques du Magnificat qui permettraient d'identifier la pièce au premier coup d'œil : d'une part le début du texte 'Magnificat / anima', d'autre part le début de la mélodie mais légèrement contracté. Or, comme on peut le voir sur la version du paroissien, '*anima*' ne devrait être chanté qu'après la note allongée (point mora) et la respiration (barre au milieu de la portée).

Une recherche plus approfondie¹² démontre en fait que la variante proposée à Beverley n'est pas une contraction souhaitée par le sculpteur mais plutôt un témoignage très exact de l'usage du rite de Sarum à Beverley au XV^e siècle. En effet, la mélodie correspond très exactement à celle d'un des *Magnificat* (II) figurant dans l'antiphonaire monastique Codex F. 160 de la Bibliothèque de la Cathédrale de Worcester (XIII^e siècle) — qui est réputé pour être un des témoins de ce rite particulier.¹³ La notation — assez proche de celle des livres liturgiques en notation anglo-saxonne, comme le *Gradualis sarisburiense*¹⁴ du rite de Sarum — les figures de notes et l'emplacement des paroles coïncident exactement dans les deux versions. Cette constatation permet de rappeler que le *Sarum Use*, pratiqué dans l'évêché de Salisbury du Moyen Âge à la Réforme, s'était généralisé dans d'autres diocèses comme celui d'York. Les versions du plain-chant du *Sarum Use* continuent à être utilisées pour certaines œuvres telles que les *Lamentations de Jérémie* et le *Magnificat*.¹⁵

¹¹ Virga strata: groupe ascendant, léger, de deux notes.

¹² Je tiens à remercier ici, pour son aide, Annie Dennery, membre de l'équipe Patrimoines musicaux de Paris-Sorbonne.

¹³ Manuscrit liturgique provenant de la Benedictine Cathedral Priory of the Blessed Virgin Mary et intitulé: 'Codex F. 160 de la Bibliothèque de la Cathédrale de Worcester, Antiphonaire Monastique (XIII^e Siècle)', dans *Les Principaux manuscrits de Chant Grégorien, Ambrosien, Mozarabe, Gallica*, Paléographie Musicale, 12 (Tournai, Desclée, 1922; Nouvelle édition, Solesmes: Editions de Solesmes, 1997).

¹⁴ *Gradualis sarisburiense* (London: W. H. Frere, 1891).

¹⁵ D'après le *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de la musique de l'Université d'Oxford*, éd. par Denis Arnold (Paris: Laffont, 1988), II, 636.

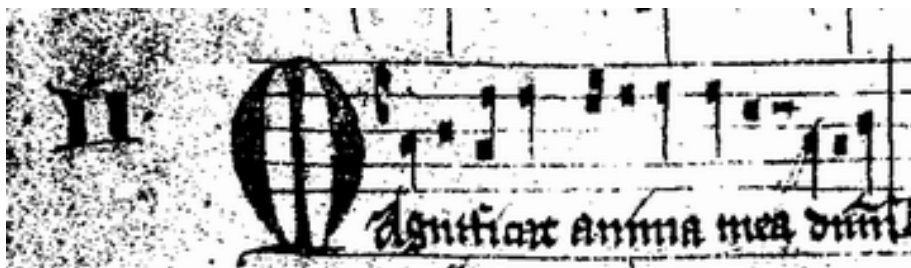


Figure 28a. 'Magnificat', Antiphonaire de Winchester, MS F. 160.

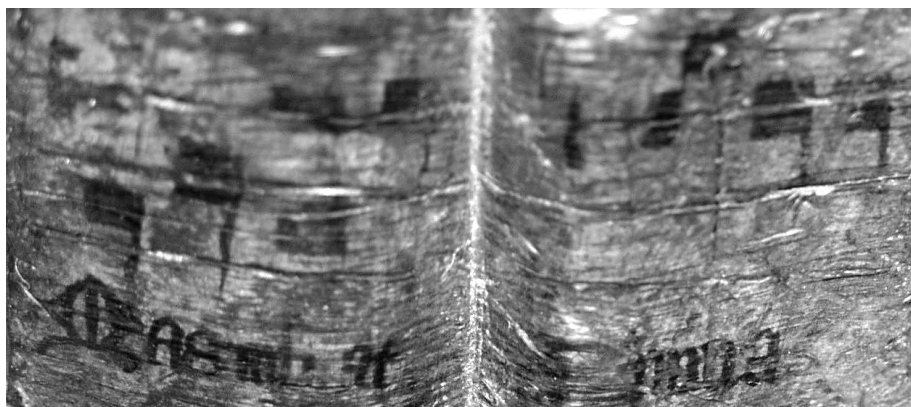


Figure 28b. 'Magnificat', stalles de Beverley.

Que signifie cette scène?

La construction de la scène s'inscrit dans une série iconographique dans laquelle un élément central est entouré de deux animaux:

— La miséricorde (N-07) intitulée par Elaine C. Block 'Celestial Flights of Alexander' présente un personnage couronné tenant un sceptre dans chaque main, assis entre deux griffons¹⁶ dansant peut-être sur des salamandres ou dragons, au son de la musique des anges luthistes figurant sur les tenants.

— La miséricorde S-04, intitulée par Block: 'The Habit does not make the Monk', présente un clerc entre deux renards déguisés en moines.

— La miséricorde S-07 montre un arbre de vie entre deux griffons supportés par des lapins.

¹⁶ Block propose: 'wyvern' et 'dragon'



Figure 29. Miséricorde N-07. Beverley St Mary.

leaux.¹⁸ Il est donc possible d'envisager un lien entre ces deux miséricordes et de proposer un sens de lecture qui reste encore énigmatique.

La scène des renards chanteurs est sans doute à interpréter dans le contexte d'un programme iconographique qui semble évoquer des proverbes ou des rebus, avec une note d'ironie envers certains ordres monastiques. Elle peut aussi traduire le concept du 'monde à l'envers',¹⁹ ou encore 'l'incompétence de certains chanteurs' qui ne seraient pas plus capables que des animaux devant un texte musical.²⁰

Cette 'partition' fait la singularité de cette miséricorde tant sont rares les témoignages de répertoires musicaux dans les stalles (un *alleluia* à Rodez, quelques pièces gravées dans les stalles italiennes).²¹ Cette mélodie si célèbre du

¹⁷ Il faut rappeler ici que les archives ne donnent pas de détails sur le programme iconographique, souhaité par les commanditaires ou laissé à l'imagination des artisans.

¹⁸ Block ajoute: 'Below them are two seated monkeys with cowls down their back and scrolls in their hands.'

¹⁹ Cf. Christa Grossinger, *The World Upside-Down, English Misericords* (London: Harvey-Miller, 1997), p. 192.

²⁰ La célèbre décrétale *Docta Sanctorum* de Jean XXII en 1324, dénonce l'attitude irrévérencieuse des chantres qui aboient plus qu'ils ne chantent: 'ils simulent par les gestes ce qu'ils profèrent, d'où la dévotion que l'on doit rechercher est ridiculisée, et la corruption que l'on doit proscrire, propagée'.

²¹ Frédéric Billiet, 'Témoignages insolites dans le chœur des églises européennes (XV^e-XVI^e)', in *Histoire, humanisme et hymnologie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1998), pp. 47-56.

Magnificat, chantée à Vêpres dans la liturgie catholique, a été conservée avec son titre latin dans la liturgie anglicane pour être chantée lors de la prière du soir (*Evensong*). C'est peut-être ce qui explique que ce texte religieux n'ait pas été gratté, comme dans d'autres ensembles, de stalles, lors de la Réforme. Il reste à chercher pourquoi ce texte solennel, souvent mis en polyphonie par les plus grands compositeurs, a été choisi pour être chanté par deux renards. Les huchiers ont-ils simplement voulu employer cet humour dont notre brillant collègue Brian Levy ne manquait jamais lorsqu'il présentait les études de textes tellement sérieux? La question reste posée mais je sais pouvoir compter sur ses nombreux amis médiévistes pour l'élucider en mémoire de lui.

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